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DECLARATION

The dissertation titled “ Commodification of women through various forms of Media (mass media)& (Social Media): A sociological study of female college going students in North 24 Parganas” has been submitted by Sudeshna Ghorui of Department of Sociology, Adamas university(Roll number/04/MASOC/2021/002)for the partial fulfillment for the requirement for the degree of Masters Of Art (M.A)in Sociology project and neither the project nor any part of it has been submitted for any degree or diploma or any academic award anywhere

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INTRODUCTION

An object which is exchanged for capital or other items in the market turns into a commodity, commodification takes place when an object or service is exchanged for profit, thus commodification of women refers to the process of the selling of bodies to obtain exchange value, the sexualization of their body is sold for entertainment, or to fulfill other purposes for men, the humanitarian value of women is transformed into capital value.

The commodification of women is the root cause of why women all over the world fall prey to abuse, to men their bodies are objects by which they can get anything and they can be improperly handled (Akinradwero, Press Red) when women were married off, they were not only passed on as the instrument of increasing population, they are passed off as a maid who will provide services to husband and husband's family free of any cost, the term "Housewife" in itself limits the woman to the house. To explain the commodification of women in very simple words, women act as dancing and talking dolls, a doll is manufactured in the factory, then the engineer uses technology to make the doll dance or talk by putting on a switch when a child wants to play with it, in real-world context the engineers are those who benefit from or the victims of the male-dominated society, and they use technology by socially conditioning a girl about what she can do and what is unacceptable by the societal norms for her to do, and they will only speak or dance when their male family members want them to and they will speak words which will please the men of the family.

As understood from the previous paragraphs, the labor of the women is sold at an exploitative value, similarly their body and sexuality is sold at an exploitative rate in the entertainment industry, an ideal woman image is the most common norm to earn box office success, Indian movies and serials have promoted notions such as that when a woman says no it means yes, when a girl rejects proposal from someone to be involved in romantic relationship with them, then the man in love must conquer them, this sentiment has provoked the incidents of acid attacks, stalking has been made the national way to impress girls, when men see their heroes doing these activities on the screen, they get impressed and influenced, they assume it's the right way to be done, Commercial movies with love story as their central theme has almost never failed to show a "Damsel in distress" heroine who needs to be rescued by a strong male figure which is supposedly their boyfriend or potential future husband, otherwise they can't figure out which way to go

The feminist movement, which means movement to liberate women started a long way back, a few years after capitalism was established as the ideal society, the first wave of the movement demanded only equal rights, it started to demand the right to vote for women, they were not considered as an important part of the demography whose political decision can make any sense questioning their psychological ability, the fourth wave of feminism demanded complete destruction of patriarchal society, it is considered the most significant till date as it is a continuous wave, it makes women feel empowered as to take the decision over their body, they will now have right to decide on their reproductive role, they are having autonomy on the sexuality of their body

But exploring sexuality for women is a tricky ground for women, as the thin line between embracing womanhood and stereotyping feminine roles gets overlapped often, the idea regarding physical power of women gets wrongly associated with intellectualism, so they were seen as the second sex and inferior beings, it is widely believed that creation of women is to release stress of men and distract them, in Hindu Mythological stories Apsaras(divine fairies) were sent to test and break the patience of the Sadhus(Sages and saints), objectification of women's body has gone so extreme that the bottle of moisturizers resemble the shape of figurine of a woman, because all these things were invented to lure man, queens and princesses spent most of the time in bath using expensive and rare oils and fragrances so that king or the prince will take a keen interest in them, the competition was intense because polygamy was the "normal way", thus every wife of the king tried to be the most attractive to king, the shape of lipstick started representing shape of male genitals, thus showcasing women are only allowed to deck up for their husband, but the moment their husband they are completely abstained from any kind of sexual pleasure or simply permission to dress up and consume non-vegetarian foods, as it might attract unwanted attention and apparently consuming non-vegetarian food increase sexual stimulation which is not acceptable unless they have a husband, but they don't stop getting objectified, from sex symbol they are transformed into an object of pity.

In India, where significant part of the population does not have access to proper education, due to poverty, everyone understanding what's written in newspapers, journals is uncommon, mainly among lower class, the middle class might have interest in reading, but the hustle of their busy lives interferes with their interests thus Television commuted them in a world of serials and movies, it is an escape from reality, but sometimes also the mirror image of society, cinema and society seems to be co-dependent variables The problem arises when man cannot distinguish reality from the alternate universe created through media, cinema portrayed women in a submissive light having a docile behavior, the audience has been taught that women in a certain attire and ideology is the perfect person to take charge of the household matters, they will be selfless and devoted to the family of their husband but career driven women turns out to be the villain who brainwashes man with their beauty and sex ,thus creating a conflict within women themselves and men is passed off as a gullible who gave into his manly desires, but they are never wrong ,though Indian cinema in Hindi language has come a long way from showcasing ideal Indian women who obliged with the wrong demands of their family under big banners like "Yash raj Films" or "Rajeshwari productions" to telling the story of a prostitute in "Gangubai Kathiwadi" in 2022 is an achievement in itself. The topic for the dissertation "Commodification of women through various forms of media: A sociological study of females in North 24 Parganas interested me in the first place that there are several works on the same by various scholars and research teams, for more than 100 years now we are celebrating "International Women's Day", but we can't let ourselves be rid of the stereotypes, their role as unpaid labor for the house gets glorified in Women's Day and Mother's Day every year, during the occasion celebrating women, they are presented with offers in jewels, garments, utensils or other grocery items , there are hardly any discount in books , menstrual hygiene items or gadgets such

as laptop, Bluetooth, thus again empowering them within the structure of Patriarchy which in itself dehumanizes female. The release of the movie “KABIR SINGH” back in 2019, bluntly showed how a man takes autonomy over life of his girlfriend, and proceeded to reflect how physical violence is normal, the movie left the entire social media geeks divided on their opinion but it still went on to become one of the great commercial success of that year, I wanted to compare the media presentation and audience perception on the idea of womanhood

Sociological relevance

Media is so powerful that it creates, changes and manipulates an incident according to dominant political ideology, it influences women empowerment but also is successful creating wrong notions of femininity, it doesn't use force but reforms one's ideologies, it is as powerful in brainwashing as in teaching, this enters into sociological debate as the forms of sexualizing women has changed, I have discussed about harassing and stalking women and how it was largely supported by media, now the narrative has changed its form, but the objectifying takes place in several other ways, the pivotal question surfaces around whether it's too late for media to use itself as the gun to shoot stereotypes, we are using artificial intelligence to solve problems of hunger and education, but are we losing our social intelligence to break free from the hostage held by capitalism, it is safe to assume toxic masculinity shown in movies have a direct proportional relation to deviant and criminal activities, this interrelation makes the topic not only sociologically but socially relevant

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thingification, might sound odd but is the true scenario of the age where non-technology habitus isn't the strong domain, where humans have no subjectivity but rather they are like soft toys or that packet of noodles sold in the market, well if a new brand of noodles is better and tastier than the one you tried last week, quite naturally the new brand will get more consumers, same for the social media, the woman who will then post the picture in your Instagram handle with the maximum number of filters and hiding away most of the flaws of their skin and body, they will buy more followers, in a market shopkeeper get the feedback on the pack of noodles by observing and analyzing consumption pattern, a girl sells her selfie to get herself feedback from those social media followers thus only making themselves a mere commodity(Bianco,2016),

For repeatedly movie tickets have sold only disguised as the sexuality of the women, TRP of the Television serials went up by portraying a typical kind of woman, the narrative created by Indian Television shows and advertisements creates a different conception of beauty thus detaching a woman from their original and cultural identity. The Page 3 column of the newspaper is interested to peek into the lives of a female actress or a celebrity and trying to make a scandal and extract "juicy gossip" about their romantic affairs rather than celebrating their achievements as an artist, it is ironic how an advertisement for deodorants makes women reduced to a "Dog-like creature" by showing how easily they get attracted to a random strange male on the street (Kaur ,2018, Page 2)

Gender is constructed within a political-sociological-cultural context but also the feminine identity is established within the media domain as well, attributes of femininity is socially constructed by Movies and Television, the early Indian movies created in the 1920s was very particular and conscious about portraying their countries which were very narrow, for them using Indian culture as a backdrop was pivotal which traced some of its ideas from Indian Mythology and character names of the leading protagonist lady was based on Historical and Mythical figures, it ignored lower castes for representation in any leading or significant role, Rural women were given a typical look adorned in Indian Attire with a light western touch, which indicates they were learning to become modern and street-smart but rooted in customs and values of their native land, this a challenge for contemporary filmmakers to show audience women from rural India in a more relevant and realistic way(Datta, 2000,72)

Social media being the most straightforward way and tool now to exchange ideas and to know more about the world, undoubtedly poses many problems too, the boon turns into bane within few minutes, while someone sharing the so called 'Hot pictures', which shows them in a complete different light might make some other teenager body conscious, making them envious of the other person's body type, it instigates in sexualizing certain body parts, whereas for young girls it is their breasts which is looked upon at most lustful object but for boys it is their muscular arms and abs which is sexualized, it is truly confounding that muscular arms for men which are strong and tough, helps them to lift objects or work with efficiency is seen as an object of desire for its strength and the dominance it reflects, whereas women's breast which

h produces nutrition for an infant is only treated as a sexual object, with no respect and dismissing its entire role to keep a human alive, though social media is much distinguished from mass media where users have the autonomy to create their own stories and self-narratives, it has been studied that various women are making their stories through photos and sending it to websites for promotions of different causes it may include promoting certain kind of lifestyle choices, thus completely returning to the stage and events which gave rise to Marxian Feminism. There are contradictory thoughts to this statement that women embrace themselves and their sexuality with the aid of social media and through sexually explicit content they share, however, the way the male population perceives them changes the entire context (Davis, 2018)

The advertisements and campaigns or simple motivational posts on social media which is completely unrelated to any kind of sexual content use explicit pictures of women through an undertone just to make a few busy and bored people stop scrolling continuously through their news feed and get their attention on a particular issue, thus using lust as an external force, it is kind of laughable that women following strict exercise and diet regime to keep their skin glowing and achieving the so-called perfect shape preaches about loving imperfect body on social media thus creating an unhealthy influence on minds of young girls, living in a world where anxiety and depression are much common disease, almost all girls face their body image as a stress factor, it is evident in the lieu of empowerment of bodies there remains the ultimate agenda of showing and seeing women only as a thing. (Mcnally,2019)

The objectification of women through sexist jokes ultimately finds expression in the discrimination women face, the sexual violence they are victims of, sexuality in a young woman, and the young woman as a human being is treated differently, surprisingly putting more value and emphasis on the woman's sexuality, objectification for them has become so common that sexual advances such as passing derogatory comments, or eve-teasing comes under the parlance of daily activities now. In a woman's life being continuously objectified or seeing members of their gender category getting objectified through electronic or social media internalizes within their mind a picture of a perfect body which leads them to diseases and problems like eating disorders and their mentality is shaped in a direction where paying attention to their body becomes the sole aim of their life, thus decreasing their motivation and concentration towards other activities. (Rooney, 2022, 1)

There is a theory formulated and constructed which has been so far discussed in the literature review that adapting and inheriting a culture, a female self objectifies themselves, and the perfect or ideal body is seen as the capital which will attract investors, thus indicating a woman meeting societal standards of beauty will attract men with wealth and bright future prospects, studies understand that body shame is the link between materialism and body dissatisfaction (Sun ,2018)

In a country where women belonging to the fields of sports, education, and business are quite often overlooked, the women who present themselves as an artist in front of the camera is somehow looked at as glamorous item for desire only, TikTok is one of the most popular social media platforms where people posts videos of dance challenges or lip-syncing to famous dialogues and movies, however, there is the presence of various sexist challenges, one of the most demeaning and outright filthy challenge was 'the chest flop challenge' wherein young girls are encouraged to show their breast size, to which millions of women worldwide participated making it a viral trend, this kinds of trend provides sensual pleasure to men again ignoring women in their entirety and only reducing them to the size of their lingerie. (Komuniaski, 2021,8)

The culture and the nature of social media are such that it not only creates an unrealistic portrayal of body image but through this image they construct a notion of femineity, fat-shaming or skinny shaming has only become more easy, sitting behind a computer or cellphone while commenting on someone's dress, their appearance, body, celebrities are even much more accessible today as they try to connect with their fans and followers through social media, nonetheless, they don't escape from the trolls body-shaming them rather they are more vulnerable to it. (Dater, 2019)

Comparing one's lifestyle with the other person in a room can be risky, it may lead one to various toxic behavior patterns, comparing your body with the fashion blogger or the aspiring model will only affect how we perceive ourselves, wherein many people think they can only love themselves when they have the perfect waist, the board hips which will be suited to all dresses be it saree or mini skirt, it is saddening to see self-love relies on physical appearance rather than one's abilities and competence. (Sandoiu,2018)

Social media is so powerful in impacting body image because a major portion of our day and thought depends upon it, however, things could be in better shape if there is a set time limit over it and real interactions are emphasized more than virtual connections, influencers have the responsibility to share content in such a way that no gender category feels shameful or have a derogatory or pessimistic approach towards their selves, they should neither feel excluded or marginalized. (Roy Chowdhury, 2021)

It has been found that in case of a relationship, male partners evaluate and desire their female partner in forms as shown in Social media, women when going from a complete transformation and gradual transition from adolescence to young adulthood goes through a various range of emotions if they are typically beautiful according to societal standards or if they fail to meet the expectations of Society thus leading to change in their behavior and mental health, often they tend to follow the celebrities and media personnel, as they are embedded in the belief getting more beautiful and meeting the expectations of the society will make their life better (Patnaik, Henriques,2020)

During the 19th century, a woman was not only treated as a consumer but they were looked upon as a product to be bought themselves, this becomes the reason for commodity feminism, which advertises its products by showcasing women within the patriarchal structure, and the problems which they have to find solutions through products advertised is leaning towards the male hegemony. (Liami.X, 2020)

The countries which have not been able to break away from the chains of colonial and white supremacy psychology, like India which Meenakshi Thapan terms ‘recolonization’, show that all over the world beauty standards were Euro-centric, and third-world women were described as raw and hardworking but not beautiful which is related to power structure. The colonial hang has been so strong that our normalized beauty stands is that to lighten our skin and also use foreign cosmetic products (Thapan, 12-13)

Racism against black and brown people has been in existence since the stage of slavery society according to the Marxian model, where American-African women were hired to work as slaves in the house of White American and European Masters, then colonization of third world countries in Asia and Africa aggravated this, skin color was not treated as the biological property of melanin but rather as the color of enslavement and inferiority, but frustrations of these trends and conceptions made black women define a completely new standard of beauty which was suitable for their skin and hair type, they started styling their hairs, but within liberation, there was internalized stratification, as women working in the field and women who works as a cook or house help had different patterns of hairstyles. “Black Beauty” has been stereotyped extremely as oversexed which was contrary to ladies of white families who were treated with respect and attended elite parties, coming-out parties, and important balls (Patton, 2006, 28-32)

The discrepancy towards women is not only limited to sexist and conforming roles adhered to patriarchy but outside the silver screen, female actors are hired from a very young age to play mature roles, most of them start working when they are teenagers, thus working for a long time, male directors or the entire film industry get tired with the same face, they are not considered as much of importance as they were before they got married or had children, thus creating a completely discriminatory work opportunity and environment within (Sharma, 4-5)

The commodification of women is often associated with employment, which is a positive outcome, Milan is the most accurate and appropriate example on how it creates a financial resource for various families and individuals, The exclusive brands try to profit by creating a superficial beauty image but nevertheless it provides jobs to people working in the factory, the models, the brands of physical fitness such as gyms and yoga centers are also progressing because of female desire to look beautiful and not exactly fitting to the aim of fitness centers to keep people healthy and disease-free(Nicolescu,125-126)

The commodification of body does not limit to objectifying women for sexual desires but also a medium to flow in cash, thus making it objective for acquiring wealth by weaponizing it for hard work and efforts, which also invokes sex trafficking, adolescent girls and girls in their early twenties are mostly sold to brothels due to their healthy bodies (Sharp,2000, 293)

Body exists beyond its physical entity, through anthropological culture and symbol, if some places small or petite feet are considered ideal, then in other place describe epitome of beauty with girls having most prominent collarbones, However, fat-shaming is more or less common around all cultures and ethnicity. Sadly enough, women bond over cracking fat jokes and it constantly reminds them to maintain their slender and slim body structure (Reischer, Koo,2004,304)

Protagonist female characters are now written in a more strong way where women are not perfect human beings but they have grey shades to their character, where women makes mistakes and evolves from it and not just to add romance quotient to male protagonist And the desire of the male antagonist, they ask questions, they aspire , they rule, their only purpose is not to find the accurate matrimonial match, they seek the greater answer how can they imprint an evergreen impact, What's interesting to note here is during 1970s-1980s when women in the film industry were not given enough credit, during that time Malayalam Film industry was ahead in its representation of Indian Women (Najib, 2019)

Instagram has gained popularity among advertising agencies, however, the expense of advertisement is double in Instagram than other social media platforms, the rollout of payment to the influencers have more than 100 million followers is around 1 million dollars, Instagram idealizes the specific products which is a subtle but manipulative attempt to tell women what they should wear and how they should act like .The author finds that the definition of plus size is becoming less inclusive , Instagram promotes various fitness programs promising unrealistic outcomes, it plays a crucial role in glorifying fad diets like smoothie diets and no-carb diets in the lieu of promoting Self-care. The term ‘Self-care’ has taken a new dimension recently, these self-care routines come with various products of their own which encourage stereotypes about what young woman should enjoy in their leisure time (Csordas.S. L, 2021)

Since the launch of Keeping up with Kardashians, the Kardashians and Jenner family has become the most popular family, Kylie Jenner and Kim Kardashian are noted for their controversial content and surgeries. There are various stories of fans wanting to meet their idols or to become like their ideals but its get harmful when it turns into an obsession, a model named Jennifer Pampelona had undergone 40 surgeries to look like Kim Kardashian which cost her around 4 crore which left her with dissatisfaction as she felt she had no identity of her own as well as causing health scare to her, the cosmetic surgery in itself is being commodified (2022, Livemint)

OTT platforms which work on subscription-based entertainment with much less censorship has seen a surge but platform like Only Fans have started selling pornographic videos in an annual or monthly subscription based. Interestingly, unlike free platforms like Pornhub which can cause harm to the system which is used for watching videos, only fans are a legitimate platform and it does not stream nonconsensual videos. On the face value of platform , it seems to be an empowering agent as people can control their content but unfortunately the objectification becomes more widespread, it has also feature like selling nudes as a source of income, and the danger we are faced with today is that most of the women who post their nude pictures for sale it was found that 2500 of 7728 profiles were minors , rather than empowering autonomy of women on their body they have made it easier for pedophiles.(Aggarwal.M,2021)

TikTok promotes feminism but mostly in all the wrong ways through its different trends, the divine feminine trend was one of them, comparing women to the divine power, nature has always been compared with a woman but she has no role in cultivating her own land. TikTok again does it wrong while promoting dissociative feminism, it associates how to break the stereotypes with feminism women adopt toxic lifestyle habits such as smoking not only that TikTok has promoted women to go to sex work as feminist boss move, it has been attempted by workers at grass root level and at all levels to decriminalize sex work but definitely sex work should not be promoted as a choice of profession, those popularizing the trend of becoming sex work a respectable trade is reducing the right to a proper livelihood, this a complete falsified idea of feminism (Jung.J,2022)

Dating apps promised better scope for connecting with someone potentially one's true soulmate, rather than finding true romantic partner, dating apps such as tinder and cupid has turned into a casual hookup app, it does not provides transparency of one's intention, there is a nonconsensual sharing of nude images through the dating apps, but most of the women subscribed to dating apps tries to ignore these abusive messages as reporting against these harassment or complaining about this in general will make them old-school , not so modern (Jo Sales.N,2021)

Reality dating shows are instant TRP garners, since the covid reality shows have been witness to a surge in viewership, generally norm of the Reality dating TV is that women will fight over a man, and man will be allowed to the pick the dreamiest girl, while the men are depicted as dignified educated individuals, the women will be depicted as someone hungry for attention who is constantly chasing to get heart of the most popular male co-contestant (Manta. K,2022)

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

My Research work is linked with Marxist and Capitalist stand on feminism, without explaining the real meaning of capital, it is not possible to understand either of these views and types of feminism, Capital is the money to be invested in an industry or project in order to gain profit for the sake of overall progress. Capitalist society is often treated simultaneously along with the Industrial Revolution which was followed by Enlightenment Era where people learned to value reason over beliefs, In the industrial revolution, people applied their logical capabilities to solve real-world problems, and the invention of machines helped them work faster and efficiently, thus bringing in more capital, the entire system of capitalism led to class structure -bourgeoisie and proletariat, that is the owner of industry and workers in the industry which will ultimately lead to class struggle, According to Karl Marx, Bourgeoisie class owns the means of production and proletariats are laboring in the means of production, there is no equitable distribution of power in the social system. (Ritzer,2018)

Capitalism was prevalent in the later 19th and early 20th centuries in society, which was studied by social thinkers of that century, Karl Marx had the notion that capitalist society will turn into a communist, in communist society proletariats will be owning means of production and they will consume products of their own labor, in dissertation work, I focus on commodification of women which is a product of capitalism and also on how Marxian theory about the social standing of proletariats stands true

Capitalist and Marxist feminism both deal in oppression and liberation of women from their perspective of economic standing, capitalist feminists wants to have economic freedom only, they want equal pay or more pay within the patriarchal structure itself, when women gets commodified, they are selling their bodies and face as products, the fairness cream advertisements selects the model with the brightest skin independent of their acting ability and creative skills, the advertisement of “Slice” mango drink, designs their advertisements putting more stress on the factors of sensuality and exoticness which is strange considering it is a food product, thus proving sexuality of an women is required to bring profit into the company, wherein some support it saying that sexuality of women has been abstained and repressed for very long, but in the process of accepting sexuality, casual sexism find its way , the global brands hardly use images of brown and black women, they will represent the blue eyed bright skin girl who were the pioneer capitalists, elitist white women tend to ignore the problems of the third world countries, within capitalist feminists, there is a vibe for being ignorant of black women, the ideals of beauty such as fuller lips, slender waist, muscular thighs, a little wide hips have been internalized so deep in people’s minds that cosmetic surgeries got very popular, to the extent people are starting to have chronic illness and even dying on the table, even the barbie dolls made were always fair-skinned, slim and had ideal beauty standards of society constructed within them, cosmetic surgery is bringing revenue into capitalism, there is an increased demand now of products such as shapewear, breast cups, etc. to create an artificial body ratio which will be suitable and acceptable to the society and social media influencers promotes body positivity and sustainable body goals but they also endorse brands which falsifies the original body of a person (Shukla, 2021)

Marxist feminism views man-woman distinction as have-have nots hierarchy, women are oppressed and their free labor is used ,where their husbands and father own them, their body, Marxist feminism criticizes the views on its women body as instrument for sexual pleasure of a man and it's reproductive role, Indian movies and series have the tendency to show women who cannot bear child or doesn't want to take responsibility of children are not ideal daughter-in-law for family, there's a common plot for all the serial and movie that wife needs to forgive their husbands even for their most brutal mistake and accept them back , because without a husband a woman is apparently nothing, the longest running Indian shows creating joint families at core of its stories is one of the best examples where they show married couples from different Indian cultural background and economic background it has been shown for years that whenever guests come the women rushed in to cook food for the family even after having a tiresome day, the masculinity of the male characters are questioned or made fun of if they engage in any kind of domestic work other than earning money, Indian society is witness of this for years that when a child has both working parents, the mother is asked to compromise with her career to give their children the best life, father is not, when an adolescent has both working parents, it is usually the mother who comes back from and rush into kitchen, movies promoted toxic commodification by showing fat women is for fun, fit women is for marriage , women wearing western dress is desirable and their clothes are license to eve teasing , Indian women wearing traditional clothes are not progressive enough but they are the perfect models for marriage and would be a good mother, as Marxist view speaks about women not having control of means of production, housewives face domestic abuse in many forms one of which is financial abuse, where there husband refuse to provide them an extra penny to fulfill their demands, and these things are fueled by dialogues which conveys the sentiment that wives and girlfriends are gold- diggers. The continuous trail of these activities separates them from their aspirations, dreams, and ambitions and most importantly themselves, the alienation theory of Karl Marx resonates with this where women are alienated from their self-identity and dehumanized in the context of mass media where their face is given primary importance rather than their quality. (Stefano, 2014)

SCOPE AND NATURE OF RESEARCH

- To explore the perspective of college students regarding the meaning of objectification of women
- To explore how women are objectified and commodified in different forms of media like Television serials, advertisements, movies, and social media like Facebook
- To analyze the perception of college-goers and whether any relationship exists between the commodification of women and their representation in mass media
- To explore the impact of representation and commodification of women in mass media

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is a systematic way of exploring knowledge, it can be defined as the hunt for new knowledge within the existing body of study, Research methodology is taught as a supporting subject in academic disciplines to people who are committed to a variety of research paradigms, Research methodology is the design or the outlined direction which forms the basis for pursuing the way in which research will be carried out. There are mainly three types of research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed method

Research Method refers to the various tools and techniques for collecting data. Data collection is the method by which the researcher will try to collect relevant information related to their pertinent research problems to help them examine their objectives. There are two types of data: Primary and secondary, Primary data refers to the data collected through original sources by the researcher themselves, it uses tools such as questionnaires, Interview schedules, interviews, and Focus groups. Secondary data refers to already available data such as books, journals, online resources, movies, and documentaries, Research based on secondary data critically examines the changing dynamics related to the research problem. Some examples of secondary data collection include: Content Analysis, Literature review. Three main research design includes:

Quantitative Research: In qualitative research problem is precise and sampling is planned beforehand. All the scaling techniques are employed in quantitative research, it is generally the dominant method of research in the socio-economic domain. Examples include survey research, correlational research, experimental research, causal-comparative research

Qualitative research: In Qualitative research, the emphasis lies on the ideas, attitudes, and emotions of the people, mostly nominal scale is used in the methodology. Phenomenology, ethnography, and participatory observation are all examples of qualitative research

Mixed Type: As the name suggests, it combines elements from both qualitative and quantitative research design

The present research has been carried out using the mixed method. In this method, all the quantitative data (experiments and surveys) and qualitative data (from interviews, and focus groups) are collected and analyzed. This method is used when integration will lead to valuable results. The present research has been carried out using both a telephonic interview and questionnaire, a questionnaire is a research tool containing series of questions to be answered by respondents which will be analyzed for the study, a telephonic interview is a form of data collection where researcher communicates and interviews respondents over the telephone, using both telephonic interviews and questionnaire were essential to get ample amount of data as per respondents' convenience, It has led to detailed insights and the methods used combinedly succeeded to high response rates in a cost-effective manner , Since I am doing my research on commodification of women's bodies through various forms of media and its impact on female

college students, the sample size of my research includes respondents those who are female and currently college going students within the age range of 18-28

SAMPLE:

The sample size of the research is 50 respondents, I have collected responses from 50 female college-going students who are pursuing graduation or higher studies from the North 24 Parganas area which includes the places of Barrackpore, Palta, Ichapore, Khardhah, Sodepur, Belgharia. A sample is a subset or part of a population that represents the entire population, sampling is a statistical process, the sampling technique used by me is non – probability sampling, which is a technique that is based on the researcher’s ability or preference to select units of the sample while conducting my research study, I have used purposive and snowball sampling techniques, In purposive sampling, samples are selected based on the requirements of the researcher, Snowball sampling is based on the connection of the people, the researcher goes on to a small group to collect data and this group of respondents provides a contact of other people who will be appropriate for the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

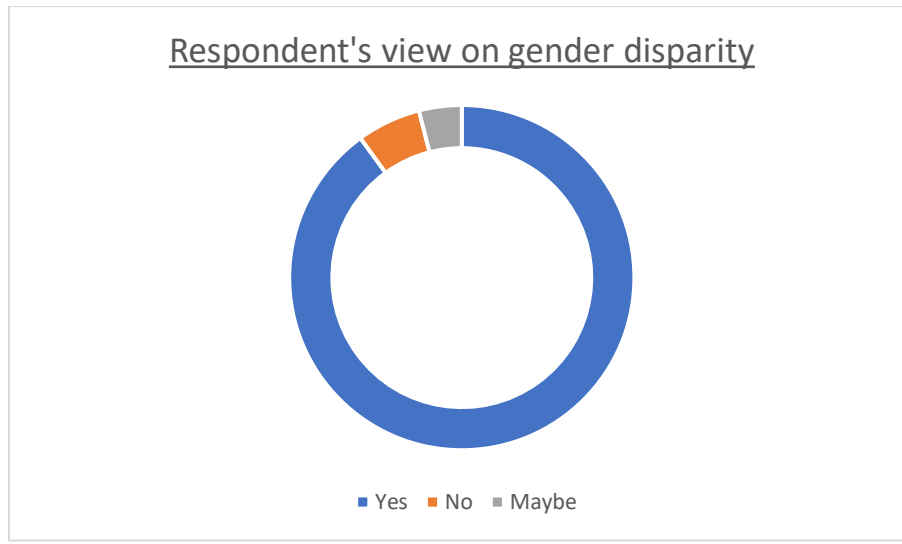
In this dissertation, “Commodification of women through various forms of media (mass media) & (Social media): A sociological study of Female college students in North 24 Parganas”, 50 respondents have been analyzed, All the respondents stay in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India

1. RESPONDENTS’ VIEW ON GENDER DISCRIMINATION

TABLE 1:

<u>Respondents’ views on gender discrimination</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	45	90%
No	3	6%
Maybe	2	4%
Total	<u>50</u>	<u>100%</u>

FIGURE 1



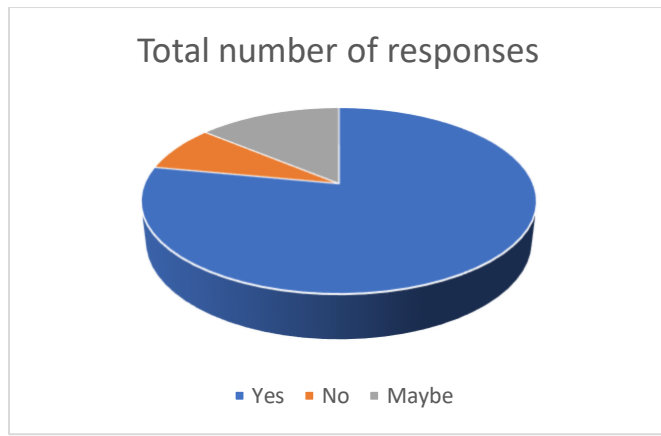
Gender disparity has a long history in evolution of man, gender discrimination started to take roots when people were acquiring land for permanent settlement, 90% of the respondents replied there is a prevailing gender discrimination within the society ,6% of the respondents does not find any existing gender discrimination while 4% are not sure if there is any prevailing gender discrimination in society

RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS REGARDING GENDER DISPARITY

TABLE 2:

<u>Respondent's awareness regarding gender disparity</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	39	78%
No	4	8%
Maybe	7	3.5%
Total	50	100%

Figure 2



The bodies of women have been treated as an object for motherhood functions or to attract consumers, out of 50 consumers, 77% of them are aware of how women are commodified while 8% of them are not aware of the commodification of women and only 3.5% of them are not sure about their consciousness related to the commodification of women

2. DEFINING THE COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN

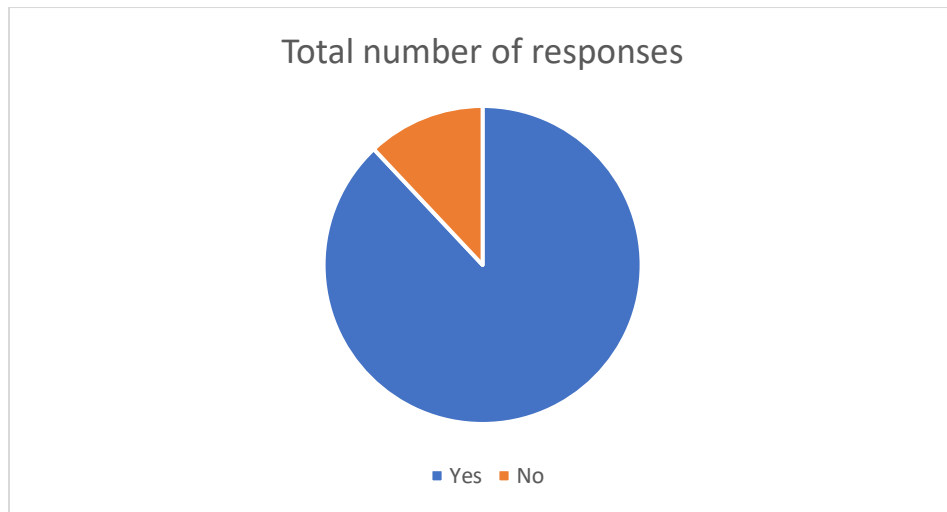
Respondents have defined the commodification of women in varied and several ways, however, the core explanation is found to be similar in many of the responses, they described commodification as a phenomenon where the bodies of women are given more importance than their inner values, their bodies are considered very important in the commercial world, they are treated as an object of male lust

3. RESPONDENTS' USAGE OF MASS MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Table 3:

<u>Usage of mass media and social media by respondents</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	44	88%
No	6	12%
<u>Total</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>100%</u>

Figure 3:



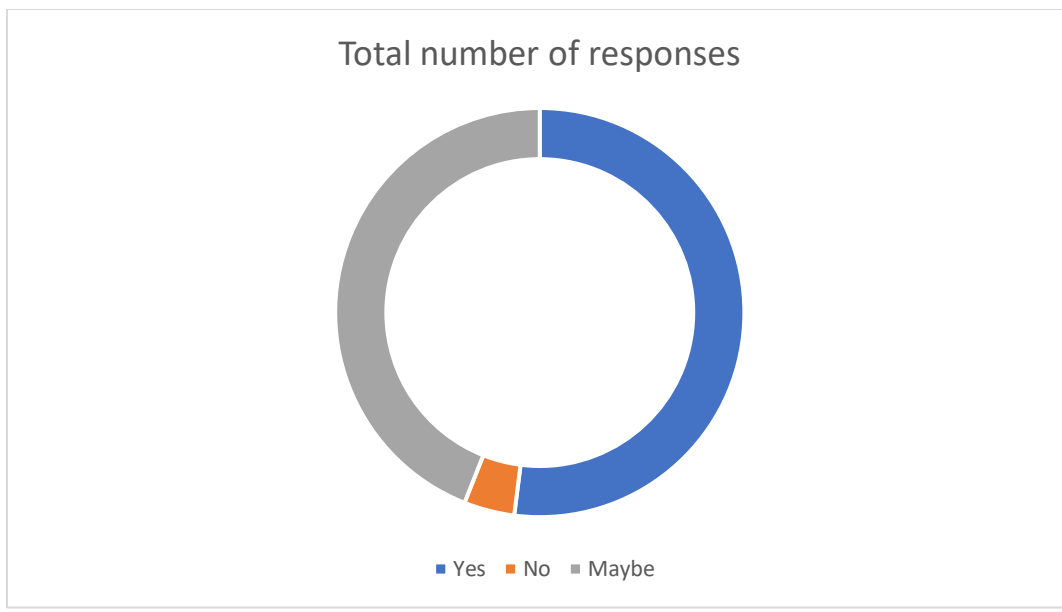
As we live in a meta modern world now, communication technologies have transformed to produce a sounder efficiency. Thus, it is no wonder that 88% of the sampling unit have used social media or mass media.

4. RESPONDENTS' VIEW ON RELATION BETWEEN OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN AND FORMS OF MEDIA

Table 4

<u>Respondents' view on the relation between the objectification of women and forms of media</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	26	52%
No	2	4%
Maybe	22	44%
Total	50	100%

Figure 4



Media plays an important role in political discourse and the personal lives of individuals. According to 52% of respondents' media has an influence over the objectification of women, while 4% of the respondents think there is no relationship between media and the commodification of women, while 44% of the sampling units are not sure if there is any existing relation between media and objectification of women

5. REASON FOR HOW MEDIA IMPACTS THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

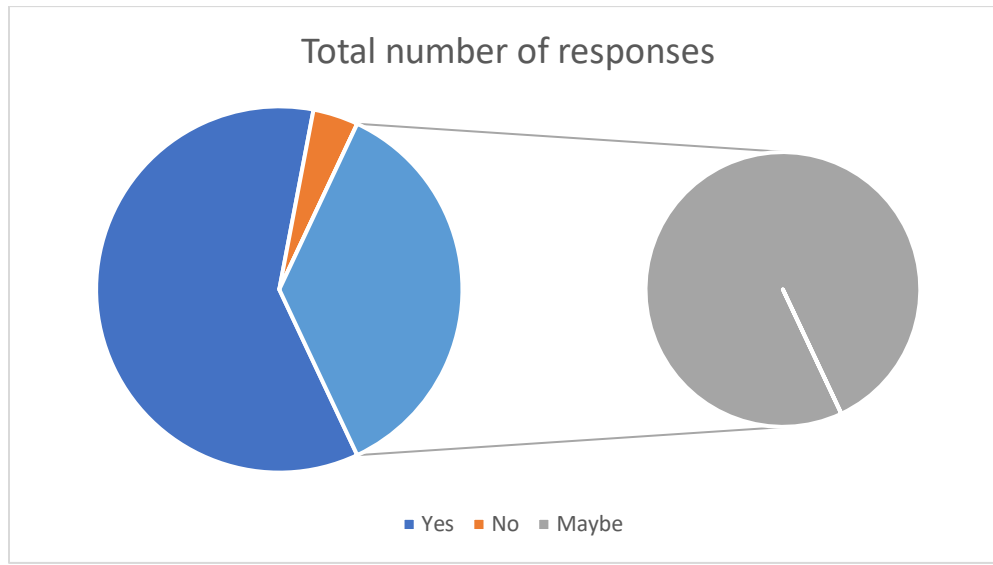
There have been similar answers to this question, the common connotation in all the responses was how media is often dominated by capitalist political agenda. Many respondents point out That to ensure the importance of sex appeal, the media promotes certain commodities such as skin-brightening products

6. ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN

Table 5

<u>Respondents' view on the role of social media in the objectification of women</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	30	60%
No	2	4%
Maybe	18	36%
Total	50	100%

Figure 5



Social media has become extremely viable and integral part of human lives as it provides scope for sharing your feedback which was limited in the context of mass media. According to 60% of the respondents, social media contributes to objectification of women, while 4% disregard role of social media in objectification of women ,36% respondents are not sure about the relationship between social media and objectification of women

7. REASON FOR IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS

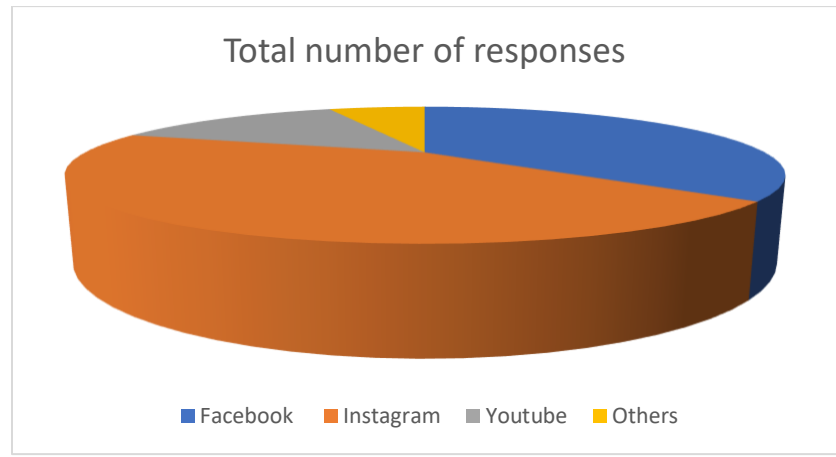
Respondents have written how unlike the limited scope of interaction through mass media, it is not a hindrance in context of social media. Sharing rape jokes, making memes on women with not so normal looks helps here a lot and social media influencers plays a pivotal role in this. They urge women to modify their body structure

8. RESPONDENTS' VIEW ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM PROMOTING COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN MOST PROFUSELY

Table 6

<u>Respondents' views on social media platforms promoting the commodification of women most profusely</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Facebook	18	36%
Instagram	22	44%
YouTube	7	14%
Others	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Figure 6



According to 44% of the respondents, the most profusely used platform which promotes the objectification of women is Instagram followed by Facebook with 36% selecting the same. Sharing of memes and reels is more convenient through two of these platforms, while 14% responded to YouTube and the remaining 6% selected other social media platforms

9. REASON FOR CHOOSING THE PARTICULAR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM AS THE MOST IMPACTFUL IN OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

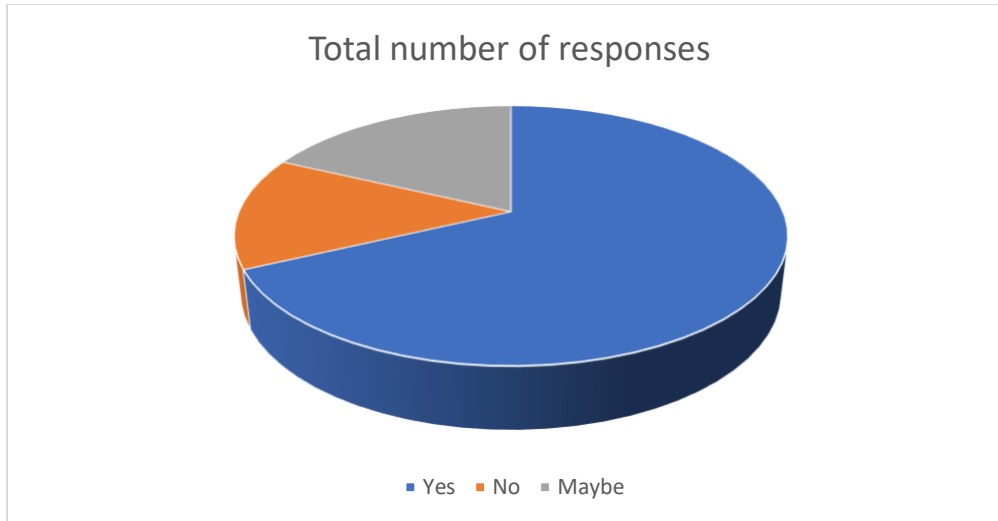
Majority, i.e., 44% of the respondents have selected Instagram, it is the most popular platform among Gen-Z and millennials thus making it more viable to be used for the purpose of commodification and they pointed out that reels in Instagram have become like TikTok which spread false stereotypical information in its format of a short span of the video

10. RESPONDENTS' VIEW ON THE USE OF WOMEN AS SEX OBJECTS IN ADVERTISEMENTS

Table 7

<u>Respondent's views on the use of women as sex objects in advertisements</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	34	68%
No	9	18%
Maybe	7	14%
TOTAL	50	100%

Figure 7



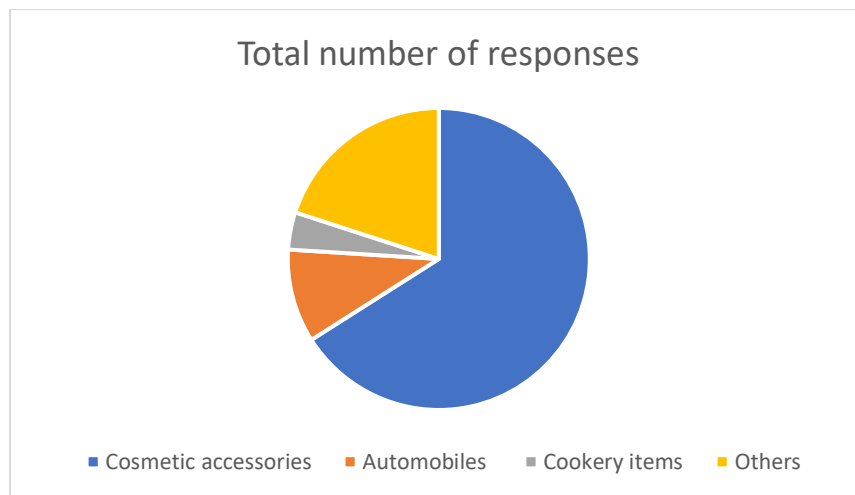
Advertisements are a major element of capitalist society and it takes an important form in commercial culture thus it is a major social institution of media, replying to this 68% of the respondents agreed that advertisements use women as sex objects whereas 18% of them do not think advertisement showcases women as sex objects whereas 14% of the respondents are not sure whether advertisements present women as a sexual object

11. CATEGORY OF ADVERTISEMENTS USING WOMEN AS SEX OBJECTS AND

Table 8

<u>Respondents' view on the category of the advertisements using women as sex objects</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Cosmetic accessories	33	66%
Automobiles	5	10%
Cookery items	2	4%
Others	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Figure 8



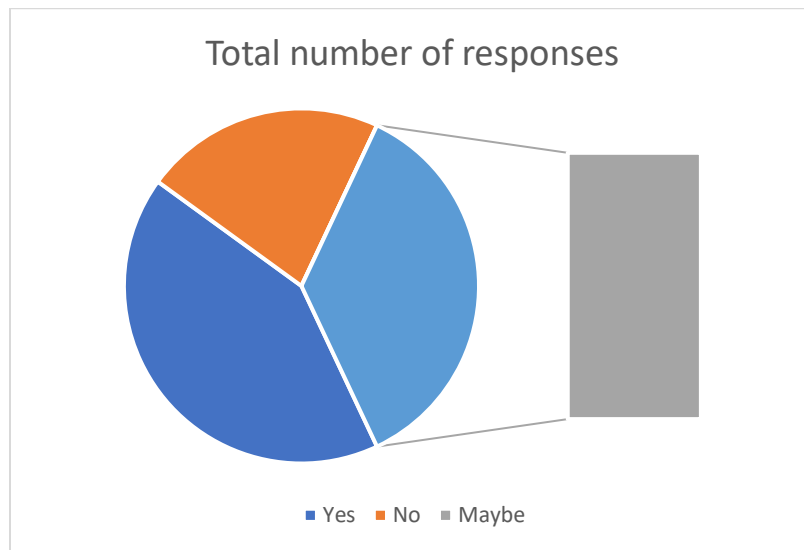
The beauty of women has been emphasized for a really long time, thus the majority of the respondents, 66% of them are of the opinion advertisements and marketing of cosmetic accessories have used women as sex objects, and 10% of them think that automobile uses sexuality of women while only 4% of them think cookery accessories uses women to send a specific message while 20% of them perceive that other categories of advertisement use bodies of women in a lustful manner to attract consumers

12. RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON ROLE OF MEDIA IN GENDER SOCIALISATION

Table 9

<u>Respondent's view on the role of social media in gender socialization</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	21	42%
No	11	22%
Maybe	18	36%
Total	50	100%

Figure 9

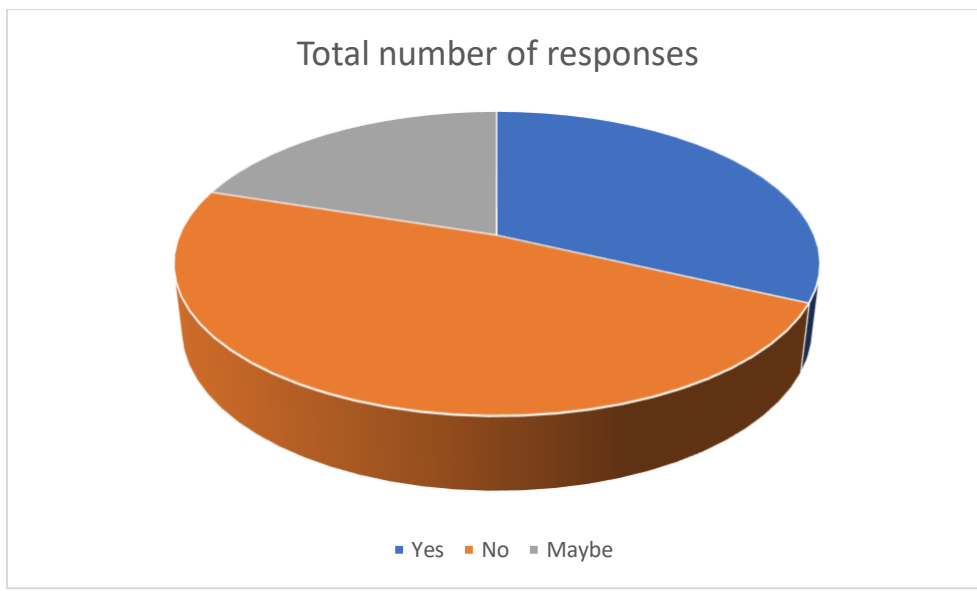


Gender socialization is an essential part of growing up and learning to become human. According to 42% of the respondents, media is a hindrance in gender socialization while 22% think there is no role of media in creating hindrance for gender socialization while 36% of the total respondents are not sure about it

Table 10

<u>Respondents' view on the impact of behavior of male members of family through the portrayal of women in media</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	16	32%
No	24	48%
Maybe	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Figure 10



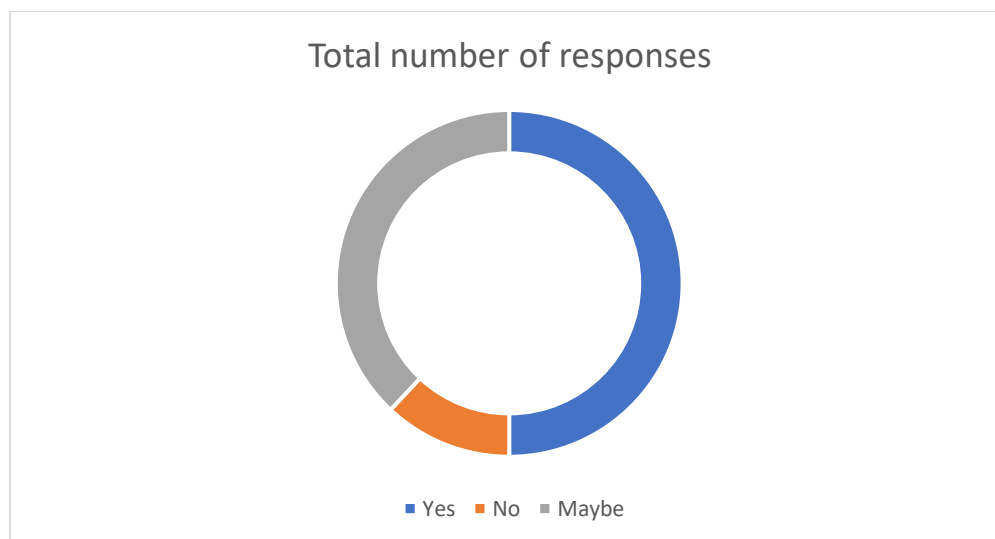
The majority of the respondents in the previous question replied that there is a hindrance created by media in proper gender socialization, however interesting to note that when asked if media has impacted the thoughts and behavior of male members of their family majority replied “no”, that is 48% of them, however, 32% thinks behavior of male members of the family is influenced by media while 20% of them are not sure about it.

13. RESPONDENT'S VIEW ON THE RELATION BETWEEN PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN ON MEDIA AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM

Table 11

<u>Respondents' view on the relationship between the portrayal of women on media and sexual violence against them</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	25	50%
No	6	12%
Maybe	19	38%
Total	50	100%

Figure 11



As it is clear from the analysis of the previous questions that media is an important institution of socialization, it influences and creates an impact whereas women are commodified in media thus influencing the thought that they are easily available to fulfill the sexual desires of men, half of the respondents think media's portrayal of gendered female leads to sexual violence whereas 38% of them are not sure if sexual violence is instigated by media, only 12% of them does not think media influences sexual violence against women in any way

14. RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON HOW AN ADOLESCENT GIRL IS AFFECTED BY THE COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN IN MEDIA

According to respondents, commodification leads teenage girls to excessive concern to conform to the societal norms of beauty and they create a pseudo-self-identity, Respondents also emphasized on how in search of beauty their mental health gets affected

**15. RESPONDENTS' VIEW ON ERADICATING THE STEREOTYPICAL
DEPICTION AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S SEXUAL PERVERSION
OVER MEDIA**

To bring a change and to curtail women's sexual pervasion over media, non-traditional advertisements should be encouraged, there should be a multiplicity of roles, not only of different kinds but a role should be embodied in a grey character instead of binaries of black and white, most of the respondents have strongly advocated for adopting sex education within the curriculum and more inclusive gender studies which will not restrict itself to the dichotomy

NARRATIVES

Respondent A is a 20-year-old undergrad student, she resides in Barrackpore

According to her, *“Through various stereotypes videos made against women, especially the new trend that has recently of ‘women’ showcasing women as stupid or inferior whereas when the same thing done by the man become the trend ‘The boyz’ to make it look like whatever the men do are something ‘cool’ whereas if the behavior is done by women, they become stupid.”*

The concerned respondent summarizes that there has been a prevalent patriarchal structure, which has showcased women not only to be inferior but oppressed them by labels of ‘incapable’ and ‘stupid’, there has been a profound similarity between patriarchy and class system, both of them is an oppression system by subjugating a specific category of the population which will incite struggle and lead to revolution leading to a change in social order In the Marxian framework of feminism, it is denoted that women are subjugated class, they are ruled by the men, thus media through its several trends trying to do the same when a man does something unconventional, he inherits the aspect of cool, the same action or attitude showcased by women gets the title of stupidity, thus through media men want to maintain their hegemony and also restricting the behavior of females by shaming them thus creating domination over their actions (Assignzen, 2023)

Respondent B is a 26-year-old Master’s student, she also works as a beauty content creator in social media platforms, she resides in Sodepur

According to her, *“As the popularity of body-positive movements and the influence of advocates grew, corporates began commoditizing the body-positive advocates and using their influence to push products, capitalizing off movements. During the commodification process, body-positive advocates lose sight of the purpose and reproduce dominant capitalist ideologies and accept the beauty modification process”*

The concerned respondent points out how industrialization grew through corporatization, and how social movements against the social stigmatization of ideal beauty standards took a commercial turn to serve the interests of capitalism.

capitalism is an organized system where private ownership and decisions related to consumption and production is profit centric whereas feminism is the movement for equal political, social and economic rights for women. Feminism possess different strands, thus capitalist feminism combines elements of profit-making with the ideology of attaining economic equality for women, As Capitalist feminists are interested in economic liberation and freedom of women, according to them using their body for economic purposes is a form of sexual liberation which have been suppressed by patriarchal domination, however, in emphasizing economic liberation they forget the social consequences of it, the respondent highlights how through emergence of influencers ‘bourgeoise-class-bias’ is promoted which ultimately fails to represent the working class women due to their agenda of individual interest thus ignoring collective interests (Shukla. A, 2021)

Respondent C is a 22-year-old undergraduate student, she resides in Palta

According to her, *“Period product advertisement ignores women in my opinion, they ignore the reality of menstruation”*

The concerned respondent summarizes out the taboos associated with menstruation, Menstruation denotes the emergence of puberty, In Marxian analysis, women are treated as free and extra disposable labor for the family who will be the child bearers and also take upon the role of nurturing the future generation of workers, bloody symbols of stains during periods are considered a sign of cultural perplexity which will lead to a unique stratification between men and women and in a new dimension of capitalist society, everything got competitively profit-oriented, the advertisement of period products such as sanitary napkins, tampons, or menstrual cups always try to showcase that utilizing their products won’t stop us from another economically productive day by preventing our dress from straining, they don’t highlight other problems such as mood swings, stomach pain, body ache, bloating, there has been huge ignorance regarding the comfort provided by the period products (Payyandan. G, 2020)

Respondent D is a 20-year-old student pursuing her graduation in Psychology, she resides in Khardhah, According to her, “ *A tiny waist, toned legs, fair skin, big butts, heavy and round busts, a flat stomach, pouty lips, and chiseled cheeks are some of the features that make modern beauty statements Social media, beauty magazines, and the fashion industry have largely contributed to the unrealistic beauty standards The Kardashians family are a huge example of setting the most unrealistic beauty standards of all time.*”

The concerned respondent points out that The capitalist form of society has formulated a set standard of beauty, it was primarily formed due to the social construct of the supremacy of the Caucasian race, modifying beauty through cosmetic surgeries contributes largely to the benefit of capitalism, Meenakshi Thapan highlights how Eurocentric forms of beauty is considered to relevant in contemporary urban India, capitalist feminism advocates ‘Love yourself’ by creating change in yourself for market value (Defino. J,2020)

CONCLUSION

Gender disparity started to exist since the time man gave up his wanderlust and looked for permanent settlement, stratification started to take place based on physical strength which later resulted in the Darwinian theory of survival of the fittest, women have been considered inferior section of society for too long, in the suffragette movement the agitation was against the forms of oppression women, they were not allowed to participate in democracy along with sick and lunatics thus marginalizing their right to live with dignity, the inferiority of women has been promoted deliberately and subtly, for most part media had played a subtle role with deliberate intention. The emergence of postmodern world and later on meta modern age following Covid-19 pandemic has led to the school of critical thought, thus world is no more one dimensional now, the multiplicity of human life is highlighted through media today, media has redefined itself with each decade with a new form of narrative, Commodification of women is a phenomenon where in a process body parts of women are equitable with objects available in the market instead of seeing them as humans, they become a product which will fulfill male lust and free labor needs which is subjected to exchange in market and it also robs women of free and safe life, most of the students are aware about the commodification of women and role that media plays in it, Social media has replaced the hegemony created by mass media, several students are conscious and also highlighted that how Instagram, TikTok depends heavily on sexualization of female bodies, more prevalent the sexualization more is the number of users and engagement not only this but social media promotes self objectification and the emergence of software and several artificial intelligence run apps helps in altering female bodies to remove blemishes, lengthen legs, reduce waist and hips and increase bust and butt sizes, also platforms like Facebook leads to scarcity of safety as random people can hack account and use pictures for promoting illegal sexual content. After the covid pandemic, there's a surge in number of digital content creators, beauty or fitness content creators in lieu of empowerment and self-love are leading to the creation of a new set of beauty standards it has led to new industries of breast shapewear and there is certain section of videos which trying to teach the perfect neckline or waistline dress according to body type are only aggravating the commodification in new forms. Emergence of social media has changed the form of objectification but long before the existence of the social media print media and mass media had start the sexualization of female body, media started normalizing the act of dominance and aggression against women, constantly showcasing them as objects of pleasure, the word 'sigma male' has been used as a sign of oppression towards women making it seem cool to degrade and abuse them, unrealistic portrayal of women has always been embedded in all forms of media, be it movies, advertisements, serial, magazines, throughout generations it has been shown that fair skin is necessary for success, women wearing the traditional outfit and less educated are innocent and good whereas those women who are financially independent and wear western clothes are vixens, those women who don't want to embrace motherhood are treated as an examples of villain women, advertisements always try to show women in the role of caregivers, cooking for the happiness of family or

making sacrifices for their children or cleaning toilets. Students have provided several perspectives on how a young adolescent girl is getting affected by the portrayal of women in media, it must be noticed that all of them have emphasized on the role of social media, this can be understood by the fact that social media is the singular dominant mode in a commercialized world where people have the right to express with limited restrictions, The major problem faced by young teenage girls as impact of commodification is their self-insecurity with their bodies, they develop eating disorders, they start starving themselves or binge eating leading to obesity and other heart and liver diseases, often teenage girls using social media profusely cannot separate reality from social media representation, it makes them more vulnerable to be prey to bullying, it disrupts their sleep leads to occurrence of anxiety from a very young age, in perception of teenage girls identity often gets closeted to her physical features, they often lack the confidence of self-acceptance and in desperate want of getting desired they start practicing and propagating impulsive buying of clothes and beauty products.

To change the situation, sex education with trained staff and a compatible curriculum should be encouraged, so that from a young age a sense of consciousness develops which directs individuals to decide if their behavior is appropriate or if there is any wrong in the conduct of sexual behavior of other to them and gender studies which will be inclusive of a minority or questioning identity should be introduced from the elementary level of education.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Time constraint
2. Limited Sample Size
3. Short Scale study
4. Did not study the commodification of men in media

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APPENDIX

1. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

1. Age:
2. Gender
3. Religion: Hindu/Islam/ Sikh/ Christianity/Others
4. Economic background: Upper class/Middle class/ Lower class
5. Educational qualification: Undergraduate or equivalent degree/ Masters or equivalent degree/12th Pass/10th Pass
6. Place of residence :

7. Do you think there exists discrimination amongst gender?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
8. Are you aware of the objectification of women?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
9. If yes, what do you mean by the objectification of women?
10. Do you use any forms of mass media or social media?
 - Yes
 - No
11. Do you think there exists a relation between the objectification of women and forms of media?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
12. If yes, how do you think the media is promoting the objectification of women?
13. Do you think social media plays an important role in the commodification of women?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
14. If yes, how do you think social media is objectifying women?

15. If you have access to social media, which of the following do you use the most?

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Others

16. Which social media platform promotes women's commodification more profusely according to you?

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Others

17. Kindly give reason for your chosen answer

18. Do you think advertisements use women as sex objects?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

19. Which categories of products use women as sex objects mostly?

- Cookery items
- Cosmetic accessories
- Automobiles
- Others

20. If you have selected others, mention the category

21. Do you observe any advertisement category which completely ignores women?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

22. Do you think media is creating a problem in proper gender socialization?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

23. Do you think the social construction of an image of sexuality of women as portrayed in media impacts the behavior of male members of your family?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

24. If yes, how does it impact the behavior

25. Do you think the sexual perversion of women as portrayed through mass media and social media has led to sexual assault and violence?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

26. Elaborate your views on how a young adolescent girl is affected by the commodification of women in mass media and social media

27. Suggest some ways to curtail the stereotypical depiction and representation of women's sexual pervasion over media