



GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

Paper 1 Written Examination

May/June 2022

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

- This insert contains all the resources referred to in the questions.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



The following documents consider issues related to gender issues. Read them **both** in order to answer **all** the questions on the paper.

Document 1: adapted from *Gender equality in cinema gaining traction in India, but queens have a long way to go*, written by Maryam Farooqui in 2018. The article was published by Moneycontrol, a leading Indian online business news website. The author is a journalist at Moneycontrol, Mumbai, India. She specialises in the business side of entertainment.

Gender inequality continues to exist in Bollywood films. It will be a long time before women will lead in the Indian film industry. It is rare to find plots focused on women, despite there being exceptionally talented female stars.

The 2017 study *Analyzing Gender Stereotyping in Bollywood Movies* analysed 4,000 movies released 1970–2017. The researchers found that screen time for female actors was just 31.5%, compared to 68.5% for male actors. The study also found that males are shown in higher status occupations in films, and females are less central to the plot. The study showed that back in the 70s, in Hindi films 7% of central characters were females. This rose to 11.9% between 2015 and 2017. Clearly, the movie sector is seeing a change. But is the change big enough? It doesn't seem so.

Another study found that films reinforce society's stereotypes about women. According to this 2012 study titled *An analysis of Hindi women-centric films in India*, stereotypical portrayal of women is due to historical and cultural reasons. Film director Aadish Keluskar explains, "Because it is a ... patriarchal society, Indian Film Industry reflects the power dynamics of the Indian society whether regarding gender, religion or caste. Females have been suppressed at the very bottom of the social hierarchy and thus, less representation of their point of view."

But filmmaker Aijaz Khan pointed out another aspect. It may be that the female point of view is less common in Indian films because the male perspective dominates. He said, "Everything is seen from the male point of view." According to a 2014 study by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, India has only 9% female directors, 12% female writers, and 15% female producers. These are less than the global averages. More female filmmakers would improve the way women are portrayed in films.

The Censor Board of Film Certification needs to accept more female-centric films. The Hindi film "Lipstick Under My Burkha" about women's quest for freedom was refused a certificate, until a successful appeal was made. Aijaz Khan commented, "The censor board needs to treat these [female-centric] films with the same level of objectivity [as all films], without getting taken aback by the content ... they definitely need to start following a more progressive way of thinking." He also believes that bringing out more narrative from and about women will help. Karan Chavan, film director of "IMAGO", a story of a teenage girl with vitiligo (a skin pigment condition), said, "We need to make the right environment to educate more audience to view lady-oriented films."

On the other hand, most of the Indian audience watches TV and now digital platforms, for reasons of time and convenience. So, cinema's effect is negligible in comparison. Until a change happens on TV and digital platforms, nothing much can be changed by female-centric films alone.

Clearly what is ultimately needed is a fundamental change in film culture. As film director Vasant S. Sai, put it – "A ready acceptance by one and all, including the women, of their equal status to men in all matters."

Document 2: adapted from *Vogue Arabia and Cairo International Film Festival Shine a Spotlight on Gender Equality in the Film Industry* written and published by *Vogue Arabia* in 2019. *Vogue Arabia* is an Arab edition of *Vogue* magazine, based in Dubai, UAE, which describes itself as the ultimate authority in fashion, beauty and culture in the Middle East.

UNESCO* found that although women face discrimination in many professional spheres, the film industry, in particular, has “substantial gender pay gaps” and “severe under-representation”. According to a study from San Diego State University (US), last year, only “20% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 domestic grossing films” were women.

However, the global film industry itself is bringing about change. Throughout the industry, women are using their position in the spotlight to highlight issues of gender inequality and discrimination. Some use their acceptance speeches at award ceremonies to raise awareness. Also, the United Nations’ HeforShe campaign stimulated international support for gender equality with famous female faces like Emma Watson and Anne Hathaway leading the way. This campaign triggered a worldwide discussion on women’s empowerment and how to achieve gender equality in the film industry.

The Middle East, too, is fighting its own fight within the film industry. It is already making progress with increased female representation and narrowing pay gaps. In October, the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) joined Cannes, Venice, and Berlin’s film festivals to become the first Arab film festival to agree to promote a “50/50 Gender Balance by 2020”.

We at *Vogue Arabia* proudly join hands with CIFF and the women who are striving to change the Arab film industry for the better. We enlisted the help of Egypt’s skilled filmmaker Nazly Abou Seif and photographer Shahira Zaki to make a video showing the range of emotions that actresses feel towards the film industry and their work in it. It is set to the powerful words of legendary Egyptian actress Faten Hamama: “I now think, or perhaps believe, I must always portray stories written by a woman. Because a woman knows how to express another woman’s behaviour, she can describe her character and portray her emotions perfectly. More than any man could.”

Manuel Arnaut, editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, comments, “*Vogue Arabia* is all about highlighting important issues. We hope that through this video, we have a positive impact on the industry, as we are extremely proud of the end result.” The CIFF festival’s president Mohamed Hefzy remarked, “This video sends a clear message that we are united in favor of empowerment and equal opportunities for women in film.”

In spite of the inequality they often face, Arab women in the Middle Eastern film industry are achieving successes that can’t be ignored. Egyptian-Tunisian actor Hend Sabri became the first Arab woman to win a Starlight Cinema Award. Arab women are also becoming more outspoken about their achievements. On working on the video project, Abou Seif and Zaki remarked, “‘Empowered women empower women.’ We love this saying and this project gave us the opportunity to do exactly this.”

The West and the Middle East are striving for change in their film industries. It is clear that achieving gender equality is not a phenomenon that will disappear after a few years. Instead, it is a hope soon becoming a reality for future generations of Arab women.

* United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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