
WOMEN AND LITERACY

LEGAL AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MEDIA LITERACY OF WOMEN OF THE THIRD AGE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA MEDIA PEDAGOGY

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Abstract: In this paper, the author is primarily concerned with reflecting on the role and responsibility of the media in representing women of the third age (over 65). No less important is the question of their media literacy in terms of active or passive participation in the creation of media content, as well as proper understanding and objective acceptance of the media message. In order to realistically and comprehensively look at the complex relationship between the media and the elderly female population and their position in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian media space, the author starts from determining the general phenomenological position of women of the third age through an analytical review of the theoretical assumptions and knowledge of domestic and foreign authors who have dealt exhaustively with the population of this age group as a media subject. A proper understanding of the status of Bosnian women of the third age in the age of new media requires the term media literacy to be conceptually and notionally redefined in the context of media policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally, it is necessary to point out the (non)existence of a special legal framework when it comes to media literacy and the presence of Bosnian women of the third age in the media. In the end, the author concludes that women of the third age in Bosnian and Herzegovinian society are significantly underrepresented in the media space, and the reason for this is the low level of media activity and literacy, the passive/inert attitude of the given population towards the media and the production of media content, but also conscious media neglect of them by the society in which they live. The absence of a special legal framework that would regulate the relations between the media and this age population in Bosnia and Herzegovina is also evident, as well as

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indicating the need for greater involvement of all social actors in the area of improving media literacy.

Keywords: women of the third age, media literacy, new media, right to freedom of expression, media policy, media regulation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since the second half of the 20th century, the media have become an indispensable part of the present. Their role is multiple, from mediating information, knowledge, socialization of young people and their self-assessment, all the way to the creation of personal and collective identities (Vrhovski-Peran, 2022). Research shows that there is great trust of the general population in the media, so opinions about life, national identity, ideologies, religious communities, and gender roles are primarily created on the basis of media content. Personal identity is built through the media, but also global culture, and therefore it is not unimportant how the media portrays it.

The distorted stereotypical image of a woman in the media space is particularly emphasized, it tells a woman how she should behave as a mother, wife, working woman, woman in a leading position and how society should treat her, which greatly limits a woman's freedom to choose her own model of behavior. (McQuail, 2010: 438). In the media, women are often talked about as the weaker sex, while violence and rudeness towards women is presented as something normal and justified, which significantly affects the attitudes of young people in terms of attitudes towards women. Gender hegemony and distorted stereotypes are particularly present in the media representation of women of the third age. In a modern society that is no longer afraid of aging (Featherstone, 1995: 123) and is forced through the media to impose "the myth of beauty and eternal youth", the older female population suffers multiple discrimination. They are primarily presented as 'otherness', then as 'invisible' and, finally, as 'synonymous' with illness, loneliness, worthlessness, vulnerability, dissatisfaction and decrepitude (Hunt, 2007: 1). In order to take a realistic position in the social and media space, women of the third age must learn to critically evaluate existing media content, but also to create it. In other words, they must be involved in the process of media literacy, which implies "the

ability to access, analyze, evaluate and transmit messages through the media” (Aufderheide, 1993: 9).

Distorted understandings of the socio-media role of the older female population are also characteristic of Bosnian and Herzegovinian society, which is dominated by a patriarchal attitude towards women in general. In order to better understand the reasons for the decadent portrayal of women of the third age in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian media space, which becomes a role model and template that women of the third age accept as a standard of appearance and behavior, and which also reflects the negative influence of the media, as a means of education, on the formation of attitudes among this age population, including their apparent underrepresentation in the media content and how much this can damage their already shaky position in androcentric society, it is necessary to first deconstruct the paradigms of “ageism”, “otherness”, “invisibility” and “synonyms” that are closely related to this age and gender category. After the phenomenological consideration of women of the third age as a media subject/object, through an analytical approach to the existing theoretical contents, with a clearly emphasized pedagogical role of the media, it is necessary to place it in the context of the contemporary understanding of the phenomenon of media literacy, and the role of the media as a means of education, including the regulatory context that sets the limits of the presence of the women of the third age in the media.

2. PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON THE CREATION OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN OF THE THIRD AGE

In today’s time, when the influence of educational institutions and other authorities is felt to be weakened, the media occupy these places and have an influence on educational processes and occupy an important place in the process of building personal identity. Thus, under the influence of the media, as a source of information and knowledge, the phenomenological features of women of the third age as a media subject/object are created. Identity features are mostly negatively positioned, and include age discrimination of women (ageism), women of the third age as otherness, invisibility of women of the third age, and age as a synonym for women of the third age.

3. AGE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (AGEISM)

The act of putting anyone in a less favorable position, based on race or ethnicity, gender, language, religion, national or social origin, education, birth, health condition, disability, etc., constitutes discrimination (Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article II, Paragraph 4.). When we talk about discrimination based on age or ageism, we refer to the process of systemic stereotyping and discrimination of older people, which is exclusively based on age, and not morally, ideologically or politically motivated (Butler 1975: 12). Age discrimination is a consequence of the environment's reaction to death as a natural phenomenon associated with aging (Friend 2017), then to one's own feeling of vulnerability, but also to the reaction to frustrations and stresses that are increasingly common in everyday life of younger or working people (Rusac, Štambuk and Verić 2013: 96). The term "ageism" is attributed to Robert Butler, an American physician and author of several scientific works, which consider the problem of age-based discrimination and the causes of the creation of age stereotypes at the institutional level. Unlike racism and sexism, ageism is directed against a group that gravitates between the position of "center" and "otherness." Young people are especially afraid of the idea of aging, which inevitably leads to the creation of age stereotypes, in which the media plays a key role, which indirectly forms attitudes about the elderly population among young people (Hant 2007: 2).

According to American research results, in 2016 alone, American female senior citizens spent more than \$16 billion on cosmetic surgery to bridge the gap between inner vitality and outer decay (Friend 2017). They were primarily encouraged to do so by American society, which looks down on this category of population, considering it a "burden" and "surplus" that consumes vital resources, while not being a productive part of society. Such attitudes of the younger social population are a product of the negative portrayal of women of the third age in the media, as an important source of information. However, according to the claims of North and Fiske, Western societies treat women of the third age better than Eastern ones, and the reason for this is neither capitalism nor mentality, but the sudden increase in the number of women of older age in former socialist societies, as well as societies in transition (North, Fiske

2015: 993). This kind of age discrimination makes the younger generations perceive the elderly as different, to such an extent that they stop seeing them as human beings (Butler, 1975: 12), which is to be blamed on the lack of educational media guidance of young people in the direction of accepting aging as a natural personal future. The distorted image of older women, which the media send, becomes the new normal on the basis of which attitudes about the uselessness of this social group are built. Also, research conducted by the American portal GraphJoy shows that in the film industry, aging significantly affects the (non) engagement of renowned actresses, as well as the quality of offered roles, all in favor of younger and more sexually attractive film debutantes, which further encourages the spread of sexist paradigms on screen, as a popular media space (GraphJoy, 2015). It seems that until a solution to the “transience of life” is found, older women will be represented in the media, as senile, rigid in thought and behavior, and morally limited (Butler, 1975: 12).

4. THE WOMAN OF THE THIRD AGE AS OTHERNESS

Back in the 1940s, a French feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir pointed out the problematic identification of women as “otherness” in her polemical monograph “The Other Sex”. By “otherness” she meant the decentralized position of a woman whose identity could only be determined in relation to a man as a measure of humanity (De Beauvoir 1977). According to the same principle, the standardization of femininity was carried out, whereby youth was considered the main parameter. Aging distanced a woman away from the essential principle of femininity, placing her in the position of “other”, that is, “different”. A woman in menopause was no longer the object of the “male gaze”, and therefore neither was a woman, which is why she is forced to direct her actions towards restoring the status of a “young woman”, which leads us to the conclusion that both youth and old age equally participate in the creation of social construct, but age is defined as something negative, which is systematically promoted through stereotypical media messages, Simone de Beauvoir notes with regret that “otherness” excludes the woman of the third age from the concept of humanity. Over time, she becomes a victim of the social exclusion of “others” and “different”, because “if an

older woman shows that she has the same passion, feelings and desires as younger people, society will despise her.” (de Beauvoir, 2009: 10).

Betty Friedan also points to the distorted media images of the people of the third age. In the book “The Fountain of Old Age”, Friedan shares the concern of the American gerontologist Vern Bengston regarding the presentation of the third age as a social problem, rather than as a creator of solutions. Under the influence of such media messages, older people are occupied with efforts to maintain the illusion of youth, which society imposes on them through the media, in the form of a stereotype of aging as decay, instead of seeing aging as a triumphant proof of living (Friedan, 1993: 63).

For Susan Sontag, women of the third age face double standards of aging, because unlike men, they strive throughout their lives to achieve the adolescent ideal of a woman, which is closely related to physical appearance (Sontag 1997: 19). Frueh comes to the same conclusion, pointing out that “an older woman is doubly different, doubly degraded, doubly injured by her external identity; she is female, visually different from a man, she is older, and, despite cosmetic procedures, different from a younger woman” (Frueh 1997: 202). Older women often internalize the self-loathing promoted through the ageist stereotype in the media, and make great efforts to separate themselves from the despised “old age.” Namely, millions of women are convinced that if they try hard enough and buy enough, they will not be “rejected”. “Accepting age becomes a state of consciousness, a measure of self-worth, a choice. The moment we show ‘youthful taste’ in choosing clothes, cosmetics, activities, friends and partners, it means we are accepted” (Wray, 2003: 510). As long as older women are accepted, they believe they can still play the role society has assigned them, of an object and a mother, even though they no longer have reproductive power. The demand of youth placed before an older woman also has its own moral dimension, because the status of an older woman in society largely depends on her ability to present herself as a young woman. Hence the view that “happiness and fulfillment in later years depend greatly on the moral responsibility of the individual to reconstruct their body, identity and social life”, which are the messages of society in the media space (Wray 2003: 515).

In a patriarchal culture, in addition to being forced to adhere to the standards of living imposed on them by the male population, older women are in constant rivalry with the younger female generation, as both groups readily accept the media promoted “myth of youth” and oppose each other. “Older women shy away from younger women, younger women shy away from older women, while both are dominated by the media constructed myth of beauty” (Wolf 1991: 14).

5. (IN)VISIBLE WOMEN OF THE THIRD AGE

The idea of “invisibility” implies, in fact, the impossibility of being seen or the absolute acceptance of stereotypical media notions about one’s identity. Men often shy away from older women because they are no longer young, no longer the object of sexual desire, and no longer reproductive. Social roles that are tolerated for older women are the roles of mother and grandmother. The media representation of the elderly woman as an intellectually vital, sexually active, productive member of society is an unusual exception. Presenting an older woman as an intellectually vital, sexually active, productive member of society is an unusual exception. “In patriarchy dominated by the myth of youth, aging for a woman means becoming invisible, formless” (Bolen 2001: ix).

According to Naomi Wolf, women’s magazines, as sources of information, ignore older women, and if they do appear on their pages, they are usually retouched photos of women who look 10 to 15 years younger, so readers don’t have the opportunity to find out what an older woman really looks like. (Wolf 1991: 82). Not wanting society to treat them as a problem, gender and age aware famous older women from the world of fashion and film agreed to pose for a special issue of Vogue magazine (2019), entitled “Age is not an issue”, but also to speak openly about society’s prejudices when it comes to aging and the absence of older women in the media.

Treating older women as socially and media invisible means depriving them of their self-confidence, declaring them fragile, weak and unattractive. They are the manifestation of everything that younger women want to avoid. Germaine Greer believes that “thanks to the negative influence of the media, a middle-aged woman can no longer

meet the demands of a patriarchal society. She can no longer play the role of obedient daughter, sex object or madonna. Unless she embarks on an expensive, protracted, and utterly futile enterprise of age denial, sooner or later she will have to come to terms with the fact that consumerist culture has rejected her” (Greer 1997: 261). However, the invisibility of women of the third age is not only a media imposed construct of patriarchal society, but also the result of the consent of that same female population, influenced by a suggestive media message. Namely, numerous studies show that the woman herself is largely to blame for her marginal status, who, following the line of least resistance, chooses anonymity, isolation, and even disappearance, or acceptance of media stereotypes about personal identity, instead of activism, presence and acceptance, as a product of media literacy. Based on research conducted by the Serbian television station KTV in 2019, it is assumed that 10,000 women in Serbia undergo plastic surgery annually, not so much for personal satisfaction as for satisfying media stereotypes about personal identity (KTV 2019). Media promotion of cosmetic surgery additionally affects the popularization of the “myth of beauty and youth” among the elderly female population, whose social status has already been greatly impaired by aging. In order to become visible, a woman of the third age must break the media constructed myth of eternal youth herself, by breaking the chain “buy - consume - rejuvenate”.

6. OLD AGE AS A FEMALE SYNONYM

Often, older women symbolize illness, loneliness, worthlessness, vulnerability, dissatisfaction and decrepitude. They are portrayed in the media as excessively caring or grumpy mothers who live with their families or alone, which affects the creation of personal attitudes among the older female population as well (Friedan 1993: 56; Zita 1997: 96). Research has shown that older people are viewed in the media as stubborn, eccentric, foolish, dependent, fragile, vulnerable, worthless, grumbling and a burden on society (Friedan 1993: 49). With age, a woman’s acquired intellectual competences are denied through the media, and she ceases to be a desirable interlocutor in the media or creator of a media message. At best, she is assigned the role of the object of the media message (victim,

figure or statistical figure) or the exaggeratedly caricatured secondary role of grandmother, mother or housekeeper. As the consumerist society does not benefit much from women of the third age due to their minor purchasing power and weak market share, so the media, which are primarily in the service of consumerism, have limited advertising space for this population, and it is, again, dedicated to developing consumer habits no matter how limited the offer is (pharmaceutical products, cosmetics, life insurance or microcredits). According to Amy Merrick, a journalist for Forbes magazine, in 2017, less than 10% of the member states of the United Nations had a woman head of state (Merrick, 2017). Those countries that have given their political trust to older women most often record a noticeable increase in GDP, as well as socio-cultural prosperity. Despite these positive examples, older women are reluctantly assigned to leadership positions, their professional judgment is often doubted, which further contributes to the degradation of the position of women of the third age in the public space, which is often to blame for the stereotypical role that is imposed on older women through the media.

7. THE CONCEPT AND NOTION OF MEDIA LITERACY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The media significantly influence the way we think about the world, each other and ourselves. Media content conveys cumulative messages that shape, create, and reinforce attitudes, values, behaviors, preoccupations, and myths that define a culture (Silverblatt, Smith, Miller, Smith, and Brown 2014: 5). The rapid and dynamic development of information and communication technologies has influenced frequent changes in the media environment and habits, which has had a significant impact on the interpretation of the term and concept of media literacy. By the general concept of media literacy, we mean “the ability to access the media, understand and critically evaluate various aspects of the media and media content, and achieve communication in a variety of contexts” (European Commission, 2007). Although the interpretations of this term differ depending on the context and society in which it is used, there is a certain consistency in its definition in EU, SE, UNESCO documents, which is manifested through the presence of four basic elements: access,

analysis, evaluation and communication. However, the most important dimension of media literacy is the ability to think critically in the process of interpreting a media message. By “reading” a media message, the user weighs his own notions of language, history, democracy, national identity, as well as beauty and truth (Moyers, 1989).

As interest in the media grows, so does the need to improve the knowledge of media users, which has encouraged UNESCO to advocate for the introduction of media education in curricula, SE to intensively develop the correlation between the media and the realization of the right to freedom of expression, and the EU to prioritize the protection of media consumers. With new technological achievements and new forms of communication, media literacy implies a certain level of information literacy. Digital media shape messages and information in a way that requires the development of new knowledge that also constitutes media literacy. As the media have become an indispensable part of the daily functioning of individuals and society as a whole, hence the need for permanent education of citizens regarding their safe access and use of the media, not only as a means of entertainment and information, but also of education. Although media literacy is still considered an individual skill whose adoption is voluntary, the existing activities of the media industry, non-governmental organizations and some regulatory bodies announce the obligation to improve media literacy.

The very concept of media literacy, as part of media policy and the goal of media education, is rarely encountered in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tajić 2013: 51). Often, the term is attributed to the media, and not to an individual, and the literature that deals with the concept and state of media literacy, as well as a critical approach to media and media content in Bosnian society, is very scarce.² In particular, little attention is paid to the educational role of the media in the media literacy of the general population, especially women of the third age.

2 The topic of media literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina was dealt with in more detail by: Nada Zgrabljic-Rotar (2005), *Media literacy and civil society*, Sarajevo: Medijacentar; Jelenka Vočkić-Avdagić (2006), “Adult education and media”, *Adult education*, vol. VI, p. 83-94; Ingrid-Franisce Reichmayr (2001), *In support of media education*, <http://www.mediaonline.ba/ba/?ID=115> [last visited 01/12/2023]; Lea Tajić (2013), *Media Literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Internews; Vuk Vučetić (2020), *Media and information literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Current problems and recommendations*, Sarajevo: Medijacentar;

According to research conducted by the European Policy Initiative at the Institute for Open Society in Sofia, Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks 32nd out of 35 countries in Europe in terms of media literacy of its citizens (Lessenski 2019: 2). The reason for this should be found in several factors, starting with corruption, mistrust towards scientists, journalists and citizens in general towards each other, and the absence of media freedom (Lessenski 2019: 9-14). The media themselves make a major contribution to the slow development of media and information literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina by publishing low-quality news with a predominant dose of sensationalism (Zvijerac, 2019). Vajzović believes that media and information literacy play a significant role in the development of a democratic society, because democracy implies an informed and educated citizen who actively participates in the decision-making process, and as such is the bearer of sovereignty in modern society, with the media playing a special part as a means of education. Without media literacy and critical thinking, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a victim of technology companies that keep their attention on IT devices, applications, and commercial content, which is in the service of spreading the stereotypical image of the older female population (Zvijerac, 2019).

Although the media, with its activities and objective presentation, can significantly improve the media literacy of citizens through their activities, by informing them about the way the media functions and encouraging them to be interactive, little attention is paid in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the pedagogical relationship between the media and members of the third age, which results in the distorted image of an older woman and the exclusion of this population from the world of media, and therefore from society. In accordance with the broad definition and the role of the media, it can be concluded that traditional media (radio, TV, press) do not invest enough effort to educate their elderly users as competent media consumers, just as digital media (internet) do not encourage them sufficiently to get introduced to new technological advances, nor do they point out the potential dangers that threaten them. A significant level of media activity in the field of improving the media literacy of young people is noticeable, but little is being done on the media literacy of the older female population through this means of education, but also through any other competent body (Tajić 2013). For now, the competent institutions

of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not offer a special strategy or an action plan for familiarizing women of the third age with the advantages and disadvantages of new media, in the way that neighboring countries do³, although an increasing number of articles and researches have appeared recently. which refer to the discrimination of the elderly in the context of modern communication technologies (Abad 2014; Vasil, Wass 1993) or to the evaluation of coping of persons over 60 or 65 years old in the modern technological environment (Dhar 2017).

8. LEGAL ASPECTS OF MEDIA LITERACY OF WOMEN OF THE THIRD AGE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is no specific legal framework that would deal with the issue of media literacy of women of the third age, but their rights and obligations can only be discussed in the context of general legal norms, both international and domestic, which operate erga omnes.

The road to a democratic and civil society is paved with the fundamental right of every citizen in every country in the world, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, to freedom of thought and expression. This right also means the freedom to form an opinion unhindered, and to seek, receive and communicate information and ideas through various media and regardless of borders (UN General Assembly, 1948). Media and information literacy gives citizens the competencies they need to claim and enjoy all the benefits of this basic human right, and its realization is guaranteed by many international and national regulations and recommendations.

As a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in programs and projects dedicated to media education and literacy that

3 In 2022, the Republic of Croatia published the first e-manual on new media intended for people of the third age. This kind of “Guide for silver surfers” offers useful tips, instructions and guidelines for using new media, a small dictionary of Internet terms and a dozen practical exercises, with the aim of developing critical awareness among people of the third age. In designing the concept and content of the manual, the authors used earlier theoretical and practical experiences, knowledge and materials, acquired and used within the framework of two educational projects aimed at media literacy of the elderly, “New media age for the third age” and “Walking through fake news”. (Levak, Zekić Eberhard, 2022).

are under the responsibility of this organization. UNESCO has a long tradition of activities in the field of media education and guidance, which goes back to the sixties of the 20th century. However, the Conference on Media Education, which was held in Grünwald (Germany) in 1982, and which resulted in the Declaration on Media Education, stands out as the most important international document in the field of media literacy. The Grünwald Declaration recognizes the need for the political and educational systems of the member countries to improve citizens' critical understanding of the "phenomenon of communication" and to encourage their participation in the media, through a programmatic approach to media literacy at all levels of education from preschool to university, including adult education. A further contribution to the improvement of media awareness was manifested through the UNESCO Conference held in Toulouse in 1990 under the title "New Directions in Media Education". Namely, the Toulouse conference proposed the meaning framework of the concept of media literacy as "knowledge about the structure, economy and function of mass media systems in society, as well as analytical skills to read the aesthetic and ideological content of mass media messages" (Thoman 1990). The importance of this Conference is primarily reflected in the recognition of electronic literacy as an inevitability, and that the goal of media education should not be to protect the recipients of the media message from the harmful influence of the media, but to train them for an active relationship with the media.

At the Vienna conference held in 1999, under the title "Education for media and the digital age", media education acquires a new meaning dimension by including all communication media, which should be available to everyone, which implies adequate training of media users in order to properly analyze, interpret, and access media content (UNESCO, 1999). For this purpose, the recommendation of the Conference is the introduction of media education into curricula, with the aim of lifelong learning. Special attention is paid to the issue of the media and people with special needs, as well as those who are in a state of economic or social need, which would indirectly include women of the third age. At the Seminar on media education of young people held in Seville in 2001, the recommendations from Vienna were supplemented. The position is taken that media literacy consists of a creative and critical

component, and that media education should be included in formal and informal education in two directions: education about the media and for the media. Four years after the Seville seminar, the Conference on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning was held in Alexandria. At this Conference, information and media literacy will come together, which will result in recommendations at the meeting in Paris held in 2007. All 12 recommendations were aimed at developing the concept of media education, which meant education about the media and for the media, then strengthening the connection between media education and respect for cultural diversity and human rights, which in a wider context would include media users of the third age. The crown of UNESCO's long-term engagement with the issue of media education and literacy is the publication entitled "Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers (Wilson, Grizzle, Tuazon, Akyempong, Cheung, 2011), which foresees the empowerment of citizens in terms of the formal acquisition of knowledge and skills in the field of media and ICT in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

As a member of the Council of Europe since 2002, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been actively involved in all aspects of the organization's mission and work. It is its obligation and duty to respect all standards of the Council of Europe that arise from membership, and are prescribed by binding legal acts, such as conventions, recommendations, and reports. Thus, Bosnia and Herzegovina is obliged to respect and apply the Convention on Transborder Television from 1989, which regulates and introduces standards for television broadcasting in Europe, and is directly related to the provisions of Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms from 1990⁴, by which every person is given the right to freedom of expression and information, as one of the fundamental principles on which every democratic society rests and is a fundamental condition for its advancement, but also for

4 European Treaty Series, No 5. The original text of the Convention was changed in accordance with Protocol no. 3 (ETS No. 45 – entered into force on 21 September 1970). Protocol no. 5 (ETS No. 55 - entered into force on December 20, 1971) and Protocol No. 8 (ETS No. 118 - entered into force on January 1, 1990). The text of the Convention also contains the text of Protocol No. 2 (ETS No. 44) which, based on its Article 5, para. 3, became an integral part of the Convention from the moment of entry into force on September 21, 1970.

the development of every person (SE, 1989). In the Preamble of the Convention, the policy of gender equality is emphasized through “the development of principles on television advertising with respect for equality between men and women in the media” (SE, 1989).

As an important source of regulation there are ministerial conferences of CE member states, which deal with mass media policy and whose conclusions form an integral part of resolutions and recommendations as binding legal acts, which promote media education and literacy, as well as the protection of media consumers. The Ministerial Conference held in 2009 in Reykjavík, where the Resolution titled *Towards a new understanding of the media* was adopted, in which the importance of media literacy and freedom of expression in the media space, including objective informing, is especially highlighted.

The most important documents of the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of SE that indirectly deal with the issue of media literacy of women of the third age include: Declaration on European policy regarding new information technologies (1999); Recommendation Rec (2003) 9 on measures to promote the democratic and social contribution of digital broadcasting; Recommendation CM/Rec (2007) 2 on media pluralism and diversity of media content; Recommendation CM/Rec (2007) 11 on the promotion of freedom of expression and objective informing in the new information and communication environment; Declaration on the role of civil society/community⁵ media for the purpose of promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue (2009); Declaration of the Council of Ministers on the Digital Agenda for Europe (2010 Recommendation CM/Rec (2011) 7 of the Council of Ministers to member countries regarding the new pedagogical meaning of media; Recommendation 1067 (1987) on the cultural dimension of broadcasting in Europe; Recommendation 1098 (1989) on audiovisual cooperation between East and West; Recommendation 1215 (1993) on ethics in journalism; Recommendation 1276 (1995) on the power of visual images;

5 The term civil society or community media represents an informal, non-commercial form of media whose creators are members of minority groups, in terms of geography, identity or interest. The goal of civil society media is to offer information and content to members of their community, in a way and with mechanisms that are not typical of mainstream journalism (Deuze, 2006).

Resolution 1165 (1998) right to privacy; Recommendation 1407 (1999) media and democratic culture; Recommendation 1466 (2000) on media education; Recommendation 1586 (2002) digital gap and education; and Recommendation 1855 (2009) regulation of audiovisual media services. In all the mentioned SE documents, media literacy and education, including educational role of media, are mentioned in the context of protection and training of media users for equal participation in the media space, which certainly also applies to the older female population.

By signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement on its way to full membership in the European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina undertook to harmonize state legislation with the Directive on Audiovisual Media Services⁶, which, among other things, prescribes the obligation to report on the state of media literacy. In the preamble to the Directive, the concept of media literacy includes “skills, knowledge and understanding that enable users to use the media effectively and safely. Media literate persons are able to make informed choices, understand the nature of content and services and take advantage of the full range of opportunities offered to them by new communication technologies” (European Commission, 2007). From this definition, it can be concluded that the focus of legal protection is on all media users, who are additionally warned to use media services responsibly, while media warn of objective informing and reporting.

The European Commission specifically dealt with media literacy in the digital environment, emphasizing the need for every media user to feel comfortable with all existing media, to have a critical approach to media content, to use media creatively, to understand media economics, and to be aware of copyright issues as key to the culture of legality (European Commission, 2007). In 2009, the Commission entrusted the European Association for the Realization of the Interests of Viewers (EAVI) with the preparation of a Study on criteria for assessing the level of media literacy

6 Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 amending Council Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities Text with EEA relevance, Official Journal L 332, 18/12/2007 P. 0027-0045.

of EU citizens aged 16 to 74, taking into account the individual abilities of the tested media users, as well as environmental factors which affect the media literacy of an individual (EAVI, 2010). In this way, the Commission wanted to define the criteria for measuring media literacy, and based on the obtained results, determine the strategy of incorporating media literacy into the educational system (Tajić, 2013: 38).

All the mentioned sources of international law have found their place in the complex legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Namely, in accordance with Annex 4 (Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina) of the Dayton Peace Agreement from 1995,⁷ responsibilities over the media and public information were transferred to two entities (the Republika of Srpska, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), and later to Brčko District. Nevertheless, the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina has retained constitutional and legal guarantees when it comes to freedom of expression, which is additionally reinforced by the acceptance of international conventions and declarations on human rights that form an integral part of the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus, the Constitution of BiH expressly states “that the rights and freedoms provided for in the **EKZLJPOS** and its protocols are directly applicable in BiH and have priority over all other laws” (Constitution of BiH, Article 2, Paragraph 2). However, due to its atypical constitutional order established by the Dayton Peace Agreement, the legal framework for exercising the right to media freedom and freedom of expression represents a complex network of institutions, norms and practices (Halilović & Džihana 2012: 35-36). In addition to the highest legal acts (14 constitutions⁸), the issue of media and media literacy is also regulated by a number of legal and sub-legal rules and regulations, among which the Entity Laws on protection against defamation should be singled out, then the Law on Public Information in the Republic of Srpska, i.e. the Law on Media and public information in the FBiH, as well as the Law on Communications, which are based

7 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Dayton Peace Agreement, Paris, 14 December 1995, http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=379 [last accessed 01/02/2023]

8 There are 14 constitutions in force in Bosnia and Herzegovina: one national, two entity, ten cantonal and one Brčko District.

on the generally accepted standards of behavior, non-discrimination, fairness, accuracy and impartiality contained in Article 10 **EKZLJPOS** and Article 19 **UDLJP**⁹. Each of the mentioned legal acts guarantees freedom of expression not only for journalists and the media, but also for every person, which indirectly includes women of the third age.

When it comes to the right to information and access to the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the legislative contribution of the institution of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina to the overall normative aspect of media law in Bosnia and Herzegovina is significant. Using the powers given to him by Article 5 of Annex 10 of the Dayton Peace Agreement, in the period from 1998 to 2002, the High Representative made a series of decisions by which he directly intervened in the legislative process, imposing certain legal solutions by virtue of his authority. Although controversial in their legal nature, the imposed decisions of the High Representative still influenced the effective removal of obstacles of a political nature, especially when it comes to electronic media (Halilović & Džihana, 2012: 37-40).

Taking into account the specific dichotomous legal nature of women of the third age in BiH, in the sense that their position is measured and determined by double criteria - gender and age - hence it is not surprising that there is no *lex specialis* in the legal system of BiH, which would further regulate the issue of media literacy of this population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, when it comes to the media literacy of women of the third age in BiH, what is applied are the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH¹⁰, contained in Article 21, which

9 Law on protection against defamation of the RS, Official Gazette of the RS, no. 37/01; Law on protection against defamation of the FBiH, Official Gazette of the FBiH, no. 59/02; Law on protection against defamation of the BD, Official Gazette of the BD BiH, no. 14/03; Law on Public Information of the RS, Official Gazette of the RS, no. 10/97; Law on Radio and Television of the RS, Official Gazette of the RS, no. 49/06, 73/08; Law on Communications, Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, no. 31/03, 75/06, 32/10; The Law on the Media of the Sarajevo Canton, KS Official Gazette, no. 13/98; Law on the Public Radio and Television Service of BiH, Official Gazette of BiH, no. 92/05; Law on the Public Radio and Television System of BiH, Official Gazette of BiH, no. 78/05; Law on Freedom of Access to Information in BiH, Official Gazette of BiH, no. 28/00;

10 Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina - revised text (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 32/10)

promotes the right of access to the media for all persons regardless of gender, then the prohibition of public display and presentation of any person in offensive, belittling or humiliating manner, with regard to gender, as well as the media's obligation to develop awareness of gender equality through program concepts. The provisions of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in BiH¹¹ can also be applied to the elderly female population in terms of their representation in the media, as well as access to the media space. Article 2 of the Law prohibits discrimination on the basis of "age [...] gender identity, sexual characteristics, as well as any other circumstance that has the purpose or effect of making it impossible or threatening for any person to recognize, enjoy or exercise on an equal basis, the rights and freedom in all areas of life." This Law applies to the actions of all public bodies at the level of the state, entity, canton and Brčko District in all areas of life, especially in the area of public information and media.¹² In addition, they are obliged to regulate the principles and postulates of equal treatment in their general legal acts, or through special legal acts, and to ensure effective internal procedures for protection against discrimination (**ZZD**, Article 24, paragraph 4). Within the Law on Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council of Ministers and the Agency for Communications are responsible for respecting and promoting gender equality and removing all forms of representation of men or women in a stereotypical and offensive or humiliating manner (**ZK BiH**, Article 3, paragraph 4, point f). On the basis of the existing legal regulation, which forms an integral part of the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and which intensively or extensively governs the issue of the relationship between the media and women of the third age, there is an impression that there is a large gap between the normative and the actual situation, especially when it comes to media literacy of the population of this age. Namely, the public and the media exclusively talk about and act on the third age through the prism of preserving their mental and physical health, while the skills of media literacy and critical

11 Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, no. 59/09, 66/16)

12 Article 6, paragraph I, point h) of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, no. 59/09, 66/16)

thinking are completely neglected. The reasons for this state of affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina are numerous, but the most important ones are the lack of research into the issue of media literacy and the representation of women of the third age, and the absence of any strategy or plan that would facilitate the participation and presence of women of the third age in the media space. as well as the lack of respect for the elderly, which is especially characteristic of developed countries with high incomes (WHO, 2016). With the aim of suppressing harmful age discrimination, violation of human rights and basic freedoms, including freedom of expression and literacy, competent ministries, agencies, (self-) regulatory bodies¹³ and educational institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including media industry, are obliged to provide clear guidelines and support for the improvement of media literacy of women of the third age.

9. CONCLUSION

The media literacy of women of the third age in Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs to the pioneering research endeavors, which systematically try to answer the questions: what is the phenomenological position of the older female population in the national media space, the importance of media as a means of education, what is media literacy in the era of digital media and what is the legislative framework in the field of improving media literacy of senior female citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a media subject, a woman of the third age is most often underrepresented, or stereotypically presented in the media. In order to take a realistic position in society and the media, a woman of the third age must learn to critically evaluate existing media content, but also to

13 In addition to the Regulatory Agency for Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina (**RAK**), whose primary task is the protection of freedom of expression and diversity of opinion, as well as the separation of broadcasters from political control and manipulation with the aim of establishing a civil society, and the participation of citizens in the promotion of a professional and responsible media sector and the development of information society in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Regulatory Agency for Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Mission), in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is an active self-regulatory body for printed and, recently, online media - the Press Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The significant role of the Press Council is reflected in the strengthening of civil society by providing means for the protection of human rights of citizens through lodging objections to inaccurate, unprofessional or incompletely published content in the press and online media (Tajić, 2013: 71).

create it. In other words, she must be included in the process of improving media literacy, which requires greater involvement of the state and its educational actors, media being no exception, in the field of integrating media policy and literacy into legal and strategic frameworks.

In the absence of a constructive dialogue between the media and female members of the third age, this population suffers stereotypical imagery and exclusion from the media world, and therefore from society. Traditional media in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not invest enough effort to educate their elderly users as competent media consumers, which is why it is necessary, at the institutional level, to develop media education strategies for this social group.

The role of media in relation to the older female population should not be protective, but proactive in the sense that members of the third age, through lifelong learning, develop a critical attitude towards media content and the role of the media, which makes them active participants and educators in the decision-making process and bearers of sovereignty in the democratic Bosnian society. Without media literacy and critical thinking, Bosnian women of the third age easily become victims of technology companies that make them dependent on mostly commercial media content and low-quality media messages with a predominant dose of sensationalism.

Holders of media literacy and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, media industry being their integral part, have not yet developed a special strategy, nor an action plan for familiarizing women of the third age with the advantages and disadvantages of new digital media, in the way that neighboring countries do, although the interest of the scientific and professional public in research on the position of the elderly in the context of modern communication technologies has been growing.

Improving media literacy is primarily a task and obligation of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also of other non-state actors, such as (self-)regulatory bodies, non-governmental organizations and the media industry. Their program activities must be aimed at informing women of the third age about the safe use of media and accompanying information technologies, through education programs on media literacy, as well as through regular data collection and reporting on the state of media literacy of the older female population.

Bosnia and Herzegovina must invest in scientific research works in the field of media literacy of women of the third age, as well as in ICT infrastructure so that this population has equal access to the media and participation in the creation of media content. Media literacy is no longer an individual competence of an individual, but a social necessity that protects the basic human right to freedom of expression and objective informing, which is why it is necessary to insist on strengthening the role of media pedagogy and media didactics, as an important backbone of modern upbringing and education of all citizens, including women of the third age.

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