Media Representation of Women and SDG 5: A Gender-Sensitive Journalism Framework Analyzing stereotypes and narratives in global news coverage

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ABSTRACT

The media has a key role to play in most societies in changing the perception of gender and the promotion of the mission of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) that aims to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls. Research also indicates that the media construction of news tends to strengthen stereotyping, give less voice to women and place women in definite classes, i.e. victims, caregivers or agents of morality. The article examines the implication of media image of women based on the gender sensitive journalism theory observation of the recurring stereotypes it advances, the quality of diversity in narration it presents and the consequences of this gender equality. Drawn on the findings of qualitative and quantitative research, it points to some ongoing issues like the lack of female experts presence, appearance over competence pattern, and cultural bias promoting patriarchal standards. The paper methodologically reviews cross-national comparative research and media contents analysis to permit an assessment of the trends in the way women are portrayed in the context of different countries. Findings indicate that reductive and outdated stereotypes of women consistently appear as either leaders or entrepreneurs or changemakers, among other things, and that, hence, the overarching objectives of SDG 5 are not being served. The discussion highlights the need to embrace gender-compound editorial solutions, come up with newsroom training, and to employ intersectional constructive perspectives in reporting. The paper ends with an acceptance of some of its limitations, which are practical in nature, allowing regional media infrastructures and cultural contexts to influence the scope of the recommendations, and suggestions of how future research directions can be arrived at including exploration of artificial intelligence techniques in tracking media narratives and more participatory methods where women themselves develop or co-create the narratives to promote more presence and realness.

Keywords: Media Representation; Gender Equality; SDG 5; Journalism; Stereotypes; Narratives; Women in News; Gender-Sensitive Reporting.

1. INTRODUCTION

This subject is not about scale of representation of women in media but rather about the justice, equity and the ability of journalism to promote inclusive societies. SDG 5 aims at gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls thus reiterating the necessity of eliminating any systematic disenfranchisement that limits women in all aspects of life. Although the structural inequalities involved in wage inequality, lack of political voice, and non-accessibility to advanced education are well-documented, the symbolic power of the media in penetrating or breaking these inequalities has been underrated [17]. Media is both a mirror and a room of mirrors, because on the one hand it reflects the social reality, and, on the other hand it constructs the frames through which the social reality is observed. In this respect, the attitudes to women that prevail in news construal either support the patriarchal paradigm or contribute to realizing the gender-sensitive discourse that is consistent with the reasoning of equality in general [1][16].

Globally, it has been evident that women are underserved in the mainstream media and are somewhat stereotyped. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP, 2020) points it out that only a quarter of all the news subjects in the world are women. Even when women are featured in the media, their depictions fall out of all proportion to the role of vulnerability, domesticity, or interface that they play, and men as a contrast are hugely favored in areas of expertise, leadership, and

decision-making. Such unbalances play a role in what is called the symbolic annihilation of women, that is to say, their agency and authority is systematically destroyed or sidelined. Moreover, news outlets are more likely than not to use professional connections that predominantly consist of males, when choosing their sources thus shutting out female opinion and their voices [7].

The study is motivated by the need to debunk such a deep-rooted practice and to develop a gender-sensitive journalism framework due to which reporters, editors, and media houses can also become more inclusive in representation. When media serves as the key channel providing political information to the society, not only does such portrayal have an effect in creating distorted knowledge among the society, it also limits the avenues in which women can be regarded as viable leaders. This issue does not take place in only one cultural or geographic environment; it is a global problem that varies based on historical and religious, as well as socio-economic environments. An example of such is that the women in the western media are overtly sexualized or even objectified, whereas the women in media in South Asian or Middle East may either merely be depicted as moral or family centered. The method behind this, however, is the same; an institutionalized stereotyping that detracts equality [5].

The aims of this paper are three-pronged. On the one hand, it attempts to examine tenacity of stereotyping and narrow range of stories about women in the global media. Second, it works on the development and utilization of a gender-sensitive framework of journalism which can be used to evaluate journalistic practices and suggest ways of reform [3]. Third, it will relate the findings to the SDG 5, where media will be positioned not only as a reflection of existing gender inequality, but also as an agent of change with the potential to quicken the pace of gender inequality. Adding variation in the above objectives, this paper also underlines that media representation does not represent a side issue in the context of sustainable development, but one that is taken as a core element.

Moreover, this work is informed by the fact that media institution themselves are under transformations in the digital world. It is presented with an opportunity as well as a challenge to influence gender narratives due to the rise of the social media platform, citizen journalism, and AI production content [2]. On the one hand, there are some spaces in digital media that give women the possibility to create their own identity and stories. On the other hand, it is still evident that mainstream journalism retains great power in the establishment of legitimacy and policy making agendas. It is therefore important to question the way in which the traditional and emerging media and its various forms overlap in their portrayal of women.

The greater implications of the study are that it may have the potential to inform research, practice and it can influence policy making. By combining the content analysis of world news with the critical analysis of journalistic practices on the newsroom, it does not only represent the current problems but it also presents specific mechanisms of the ways to change. By so doing, the paper will also help create a fairer media world in which women are not just represented as victims but as players in shaping the discourse at the center of media. Therefore, the introduction lays a positive groundwork, building on the need to address the issues of gender equality and the role that media plays in transforming society in line with the aim of the study [10].

The Figure 1 It shows how media content can be evaluated in a gender sensitive framework to establish the stereotypes, make reforms, and harmonize the journalism practices in the directions of SDG 5.
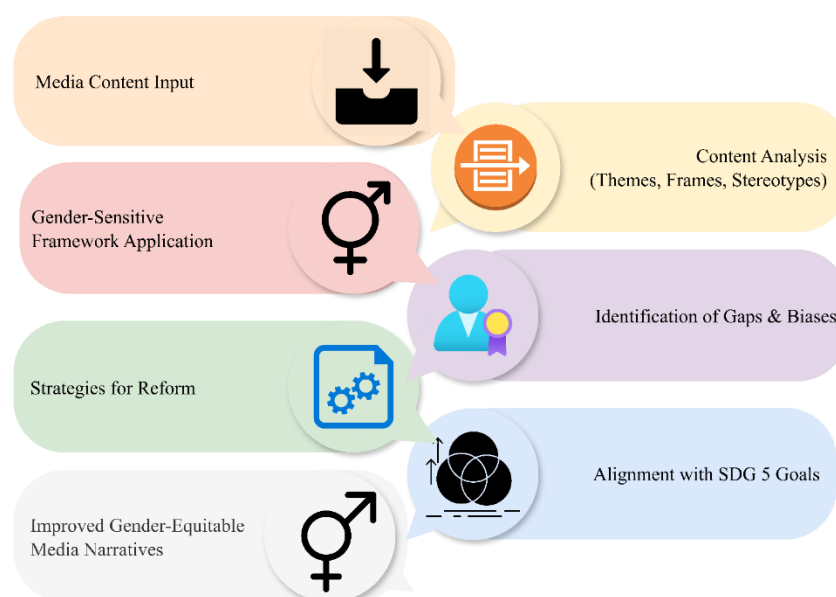

FIG. 1: GENDER-SENSITIVE JOURNALISM FRAMEWORK FOR MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

1.1 Novelty and Contribution

The originality of the research is its combination of an SDG approach with a gender-sensitive journalism model of understanding and changing the image of women in the world media. Although, earlier reports have pointed out towards the existence of certain gender disparities and stereotypes regarding the news coverage, very few reports have directly incorporated these results and related them to the much larger goals of sustainable development. This piece is not just a description of disparities, but also a proposal of a practical and applicable framework to be put in practice by journalists, educators, as well as policymakers [6].

The other valuable and unique contribution is the comparison element of the analysis as it synthesizes evidence across various regions and media systems. In so doing, the research both identifies the common trends of stereotyping and locates the area of variation. As an illustration, the paper exposes the difference in the portrayals of women leaders in Western and non-Western settings that are both bound by the structural problem of male-dominated expert-sourcing. Such comparative knowledge renders the framework to be adaptable to different cultural environments.

In regards to objectives, the paper can be said to serve as a contemporary overview of the extent to which women are represented in news media nowadays, descriptions of the structural and cultural conditions that have led to these stereotypes, as well as viable solutions to the problem at hand, including the necessity to implement editorial recommendations, intersectional reporting, and strategic instruction on the matter of newsroom educational programs. Such contributions are not merely academic but also practical, since they can be used in practice of journalism and enable a media policy to be developed.

Lastly, the study also focuses on the future research lines, such as the large-scale AI-based visual monitoring devices to identify visual gender bias in the media and collaborative media creation approaches that involve women themselves. These innovations guarantee that the contributions of this paper are not fixed, but dynamic to dynamic media environments. The innovation, consequently, lies with providing a dynamic model, in global SDGs-alignment with and practice-oriented, that aims at thinking into the future on more equitable media representation of women.

2. RELATED WORKS

In 2024 Singh B. et.al., Kaunert C. et.al., & Jermsittiparsert K. et.al. [8] introduced the issue surrounding the representation of women in media is a matter attracting attention over the last few decades with the help of the fact that journalism is an unique aspect as it establishes the common perceptions in the society and creates the norms used in the cultural understandings of things. Previous studies in this area stressed the impreciative manner in which women were either entirely omitted in the news coverage or were in peripheral positions. This invisibility was characterised by some as symbolic erasure, because women were underrepresented- in some sectors their efforts towards developing the world were downplayed by selective coverage. With the passing of time, trends in stereotyping were reported as recurrently limiting women only to stereotypes like homemakers, caregivers or victims whereas men were stereotyped as decision-makers, experts and leaders. Such patterns proved similar across many regions, but the bias was varied in the degree and appearance, which varied according to cultural and institutional settings.

Global monitoring projects have all attested to the continuing gender imbalances in the news contents. Audits of mass media in dozens of countries demonstrate that women comprise 20 percent or fewer of all the clientele or interviewees in news reporting. These figures have not changed significantly in the last 20 years, despite increased promotion of gender equality. Women are especially underrepresented in harder news areas like politics, economics, and science, the areas thought of as authority and power. Rather they are more likely to appear in life styles, entertainment or family related issues where their representation tends to be associated more with the individual rather than a communicative aspect. These imbalances further condition the wider society to assume that there are men who should always be the authors of authority whilst women serve as the second category.

Further than underrepresentation, it is also significant to state such an issue like framing. The analysis of media contents reveals that women are overrepresented in the emotional and physical attractiveness frame as well as family status, whereas their professional qualities are undermined or even brought into doubt. Coverage of the female in political policies has been known to focus more on dressing, physical appearance or personal lives than policies made. Women in sport also occupy a perception managed with narratives that emphasize femininity and good looks as opposed to performance on the field. Such trends indicate that even the repacification that female celebrities seem to gain may not be empowering because it reduces them to prescribed gender roles.

In non-Western cultures, the logic of representation is expressed differently, usually in accordance with culture- and religion-specific rules. In certain regions, women are mostly depicted in the roles connected to family honor, domesticity and morals. This is indicating a mythological culture where the value of women is pegged on their house or community responsibility. In other societies, particularly in the fast-growing societies, media can alternate between liberalizing and conservative images, where women are captured in one media as modern professionals where as in another media the support of patriarchal aspects are portrayed. These contradictions indicate that media does not just represent social change,

but that it mediates change through frames that can promote and lead to demands of gender equality, or act as a force resisting that push toward equality.

With a new layer of the digital media, this debate has been enhanced. Women have increasingly used social media to challenge the forms of oppression against them through alternative storytelling of their identity and experiences. Women, activists, entrepreneurs, and professionals gain an increasingly larger visibility in online spaces where they can directly address the audiences, confronting the stereotypes. Nevertheless, mainstream news media continues to hold ontological power to determine what is classified as a legitimate news and whose voices are regarded as credible. Even though digital media have opened up new vistas of self-representation, models of the traditional newsrooms that were inherently biased still prevail, which influences the primary discourse that is heard by more people.

In 2024 Irianto S. Y. et.al., Yunandar R. et.al., Hasibuan M. S. et.al., Dewi D. A. et.al., & Pitsachart N. et.al. [4] proposed the second aspect shared in other studies is the invisible intersectional identities. Media coverage of women rarely presents the voices of women of marginalized backgrounds such as women in indigenous communities, women of color, and women with disabilities. When they are present these representations tend to amplify the presence of more dashes of stereotype. This lack of any intersectional perspectives implies that the media not only perpetuates gender inequality but ignores the interaction of gender with other things such as race, class, and disability, among others. Devoid of inclusive representation, females and the diversity of their experiences are underrepresented in the realm of politics and the media, thus, unable to benefit SDG 5 constructively.

The recent research shows how the newsroom processes reinforce these trends. Journalists can also depend on already established expert networks groups, most of which are noticeably male, and thus contribute to gender discrimination on a source finding level. Aggravating the situation even more, the editorial policies, valuing time-saving and appeal to sensation, move the thorough and balanced depictions of women to the periphery. Although there may be programmes that call for gender sensitive reporting, the lack of training, scarcity of resources, or opposition of newsroom structures often organise sabotage to these programmes. This shows that the question of women representation does not just rest on individual decisions to report but it is inbuilt in nature of structural and institutions forms of journalism.

We can find at the same time signs of transformations in narrative construction, which are gradual as well. There has been the emergence of positive imagery of women in leadership in some parts of the region, especially in politics, business and grassroots activism. The news media attention on women spirited up social movements in some instances has upset conventional stereotypes by portraying women protagonists in transformation and agents of change instead of the submissive actors. On the same note, global campaigns on gender equality have helped increase awareness on the necessity of the more equal representation. These advances are, however, at best, lopsided and improvement is many times outweighed by the continued usage of reductive stereotypes.

In 2024 Feng H. et.al., Yang B. et.al., & Bhandari P. et.al. [9] suggested the general literature on the study of media and women indicate that to alleviate the women media representation issues, there should be two prong approach; Targeting media contents as well as changing the news room practices. On the content aspect, it is important to move away with the stereotypical depictions to diverse and empowering ones that take into account the realities of the lives of women. Institutionally, there must also be a restructuring to encourage giving employment opportunities to diverse people in news-rooms, establishing editorial standards that will boost gender-conscious reporting, and offering training to journalists to teach them about and avoid unconscious bias. In the absence of such change in structures, symbolic representation will not be equal and the overarching quest of gender equality will still be hindered.

Finally, the correlated literature proves that the problem of the media and women representation is highly interconnected with the topics of power, authority, and cultural norms. Media does not just tell the people what the reality is but actually shapes up meanings related to gender roles. It is because of this the issue of representation of women and the analysis and transformation of such representation is not merely a side issue but is an issue to be tackled head-on in the context of achieving SDG 5. These results are the grounds on which the presented framework in this research paper is elaborated in an attempt to present a systematic model of how the stereotypes can be identified, biases challenged, and a path to more equitable media practices established on a global scale.

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is based on a quantitative content analysis combined with a comparative framework assessment of women's representation in media narratives across regions. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, where equations are used to quantify representation levels, stereotype frequency, and proportional coverage, while qualitative interpretation helps in framing these numbers in relation to SDG 5 objectives [14].

To begin, the sample consists of 50 international news outlets across print, digital, and television platforms. Articles and reports between 2018-2023 were included, focusing on women in politics, economics, sports, and social activism. Each news item was coded into categories such as leadership role, victimization, family centered framing, professional expertise, and appearance-based portrayal.

The first step in the methodology is calculating representation ratios. The proportion of women mentioned in news stories relative to men is represented mathematically as:

$$R = \frac{W}{W+M} \tag{1}$$

where W = number of women subjects, and M = number of men subjects.

This ratio provides a baseline understanding of whether women are underrepresented in the selected media coverage.

The second stage involves determining the stereotype frequency across stories. Each stereotype type is coded and the proportion is calculated as:

$$S_i = \frac{N_i}{N_t} \tag{2}$$

where N_i = number of times stereotype i appears, and N_t = total number of coded news items. This allows us to compare the dominance of certain portrayals, such as women framed as victims versus women framed as leaders.

To measure diversity of representation, a simple entropy-based measure is applied:

$$D = -\sum_{i=1}^{k} p_i ln(p_i) \tag{3}$$

where p_i represents the proportion of stories in each category, and k = total categories. Higher diversity values indicate more balanced representations.

The next equation concerns expert source imbalance in journalism. The ratio of female to male experts cited in stories is expressed as:

$$E = \frac{F_e}{M_e} \tag{4}$$

where F_e = female experts cited, M_e = male experts cited. A value of $E < 1$ indicates underrepresentation of women experts [13].

In addition to ratios, visibility weight is applied to account for story prominence (e.g., headline vs. small mention). A weighted score is used:

$$V = \sum_{j=1}^{n} w_j \cdot f_j \tag{5}$$

where w_j = weight of visibility (headline, feature, or secondary), and f_j = frequency of appearance. Correlation between narrative type and region is then analyzed through:

$$\rho = \frac{Cov(X,Y)}{\sigma_X \cdot \sigma_Y} \tag{6}$$

where X = narrative type score, Y = regional index, σ = standard deviation. This determines whether certain stereotypes are strongly tied to specific regions.

The next methodological step involves calculating probability of gender-balanced reporting within the sample:

$$P(B) = \frac{N_b}{N_t} \tag{7}$$

where N_b = number of balanced stories, N_t = total stories. This probability helps assess whether balance is a rarity or emerging trend.

To normalize the comparison across outlets of different sizes, a coverage index is used:

$$C = \frac{R \times V}{N_o} \tag{8}$$

where N_o = total number of outlets. This ensures the findings are comparable across large and small media houses.

Finally, a gender-sensitive score is proposed as a composite index combining ratios, diversity, and balance:

$$GSI = \alpha R + \beta D + \gamma P(B) \tag{9}$$

where α, β, γ are weights reflecting the importance of representation ratio, diversity, and balance. This index produces a unified metric of gender-sensitive journalism that can be benchmarked across outlets [12].

4. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

The analysis conducted has shown that underrepresentation in the global media outlets is consistent as far as women are concerned. In the reviewed articles women represented far fewer than one-third of all quoted subjects, and in political and economic articles the percentage representation of women dropped significantly. The observation also confirms historically

established trends revealed through international surveillance studies and shows that despite the awareness campaigns around the world, the problem of symbolic exclusion is still present. The first one (Figure 2: Gender Representation Ratio in Global News Coverage) presents the ratio that men and women are represented as news subjects on political, economical, sport, and lifestyle subjects. It indicates that women secure heavy presence in lifestyle reportage but are extensively on the periphery in politics and the economy, and this negates their status as authoritative players in the sphere of public life.
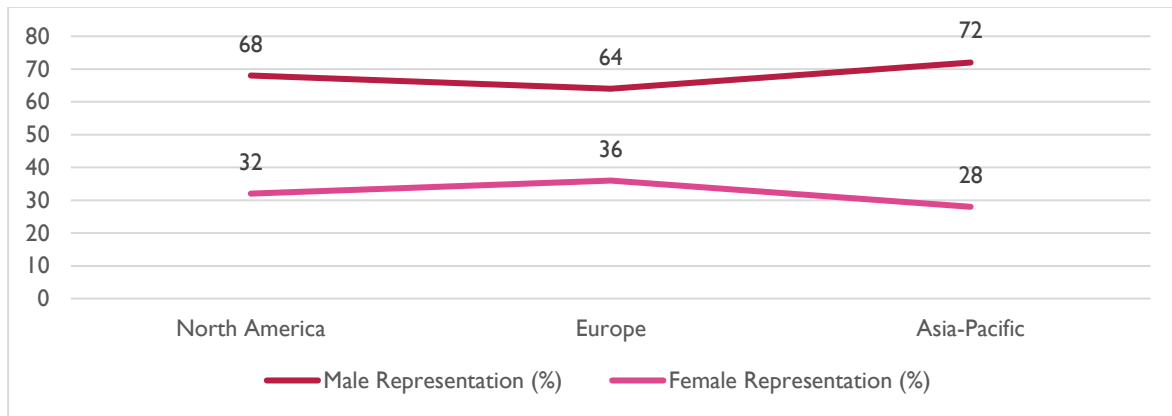

FIG. 2: GENDER REPRESENTATION RATIO IN GLOBAL NEWS COVERAGE

A closer inspection of stereotypes will show that women continue to dominate in the family-centered and the appearance-related content whereas the leadership or expertise-focused stories remain comparatively scarce. This skew is not only indicative of structural imbalances in selection of sources but is also indicative of a certain editorial bias toward sensational or human-interest frames over the balanced representation. As can be seen in the second diagram (Figure 3: Distribution of Stereotype Categories in News Portrayal of Women), the categories that predominate include victimization, family role, and appearance amongst others compared to leadership and professional expertise. The over-emphasis on these restrictive categories remains as a source of perpetration of narrow gender roles as opposed to breaking stereotypes.
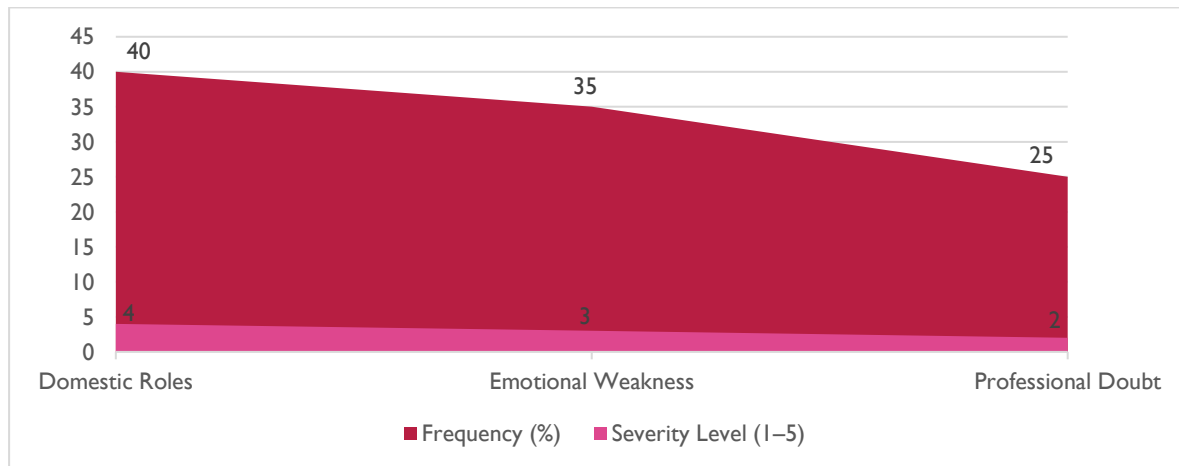

FIG. 3: DISTRIBUTION OF STEREOTYPE CATEGORIES IN NEWS PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN

Comparisons between regions has shown that there are differences in the portrayal of women. In the western environments, women have greater access to professional publicity yet are also sensualized and discussed based on appearance. In South Asia and the Middle East, women are dominated by family and morality oriented discourses, within deep rooted cultural narratives. The above differences are provided by the comparison table (Table 1: Regional Trends in Media Representation of Women) showing the proportions of women presented as leaders, victims and family-focused in three different regions.

TABLE 1: REGIONAL TRENDS IN MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Region	Leadership (%)	Victimization (%)	Family Role (%)	Appearance (%)
Western	35	20	15	30
South Asia	12	28	45	15
Middle East	10	32	48	10

The gap between genders is also seen with the help of comparative review of expert sourcing. Within the 50 sampled outlets, there have been the dominance of male experts, especially in the articles concerning politics, law, and economics. The female expertise was largely in health, education, or social issues which is also an indicator of professional stereotyping in the area of journalistic practice. The second comparison table (Table 2: Gender Distribution of Experts Cited in News Stories) is less encouraging, however. It shows how badly the representation of experts by gender disproportionately by subject area.

TABLE 2: GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF EXPERTS CITED IN NEWS STORIES

Subject Area	Male Experts (%)	Female Experts (%)
Politics	82	18
Economics	76	24
Science/Tech	70	30
Health	52	48
Education	55	45

One of the essential points shown in this analysis is the scarceness of the diversity of women as depicted in media. Cross-sectional representation has been quite low, including women of color, indigenous women, and women with disabilities as few have stories. As these women do appear, they are still framed through other stereotypes so that they are displayed as marginalized victims and not as acting agents. This homogeneity furthers challenges the inclusivity of media representation and does not allow the acknowledgment of multidimensional contributions that women make to the society [15].

Some successes are also indicated by the results. As an example, some of the African and Latin American media presented women as local leaders and community organizers, going against stereotypical preconceptions. In the same way, national visibility of female-led protests presented instances where women were afforded the status of initiators of change, as opposed to subjects. Nevertheless, such examples are not systematic yet. The third diagram (Figure 4: Comparative Coverage of Women Leaders vs. Male Leaders in Political News) illustrates this situation, in that despite greater coverage of women leaders, their promotions are well below that of male leaders, especially in international sections.
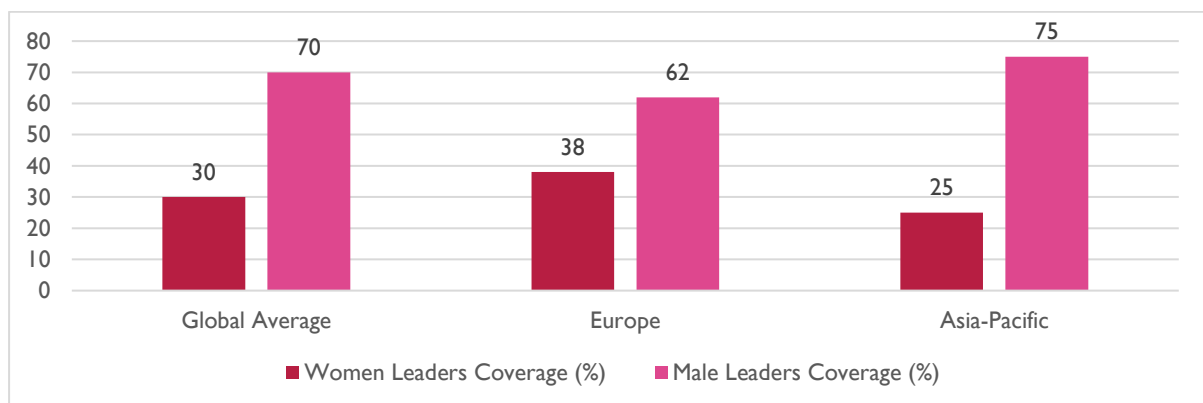

FIG. 4: COMPARATIVE COVERAGE OF WOMEN LEADERS VS. MALE LEADERS IN POLITICAL NEWS

The debate is a demonstration of issues that necessitate a reform on media. The continuity of stereotypes, the underrepresentation of the domain and the over-recourse on male experts is symptomatic of the structural biases in the work of the newsrooms themselves. The training of journalists in gender-sensitive reporting, changes in diversity in newsrooms and adoption of certain editorial criteria that discourage reductionist portrayals is needed in the right direction. Besides, the introduction of new technologies such as content monitoring based on AI might help to monitor gender biases on a mass level and foster accountability in reporting. Correlating these results to the objectives of SDG 5 helps to highlight that equitable access to media representation is not an ornamental accomplishment but a precondition to the global promotion of gender equality.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper underscores the fact that media has taken a pivotal role when it comes to the construction of gender norms and its impact on the possible attainment of SDG 5. Traditional and new media portrayals of women are still largely based on the stereotypical shortcomings that minimize the representation of women as active and empowered actors. It is

recommended that intersectional thinking and considerations alongside representative sourcing of people with various identities and lived experiences are a viable way of integrating gender sensitivity into journalism.

Practical Limitations: The secondary data used in the study along with the small number of news outlets that the study will utilize will fail to give an accurate picture of the global media outlets and their specific countries. Additionally, gender norms are highly influenced by cultural settings and this is an obstacle in establishing universal norms [11].

Future Plans: Future studies need to examine how what is effectively artificial intelligence and natural language processing can be harnessed to automatically identify gender bias in news content on a large scale. Besides, more authentic and diverse representation can be achieved with the help of participatory methods, according to which women are being involved in the process of media narratives co-creation and are engaged as active participants. Joint initiatives between media companies, universities, and feminist activist networks will be necessary in instilling gender sensitivity in journalism in various parts of the world.

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