

Perspectives and Reflections on Media, Gender, Children and Culture in the Digital Age

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Abstract:

This paper explores the dynamic intersections of media, gender, children, and culture in the context of the digital media, where technological advancements have reshaped how identities are constructed, communicated, and contested. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives, the paper examines how digital media platforms influence the socialization of children, the reinforcement or disruption of gender norms, and the negotiation of cultural values. The paper reflects on how children are no longer passive recipients of media messages but active agents who engage with, interpret, and even produce content, often navigating complex terrains of gendered and cultural representation. It also considers how globalized digital media flows intersect with local cultural contexts, affecting how children perceive themselves and others. The paper argues that many feminists believe that media by its power and its agenda-setting role, which include giving prominence to people and events, have portrayed women in the most unfavorable terms whether as key players in the media industry or as recipients of media content. The power of the media extends not only to what is covered, but also what is omitted. Women have been omitted by the media despite their upliftment in the last half of a century from mothers and wives to professionals with expertise in many fields of human endeavour. The paper further interrogates the implications of algorithmic content delivery, media literacy gaps, and digital inequalities. Through critical reflections and analysis, the paper advocates for inclusive media policies and culturally sensitive media literacy approaches that recognize children's agency while addressing structural constraints.

Keywords:

Children, Media, Gender, Feminism, and culture

I. Introduction

In contemporary society, the intersection of media, gender, children, and culture has become a critical area of inquiry across disciplines such as communication studies, sociology, education, and cultural studies. Media play a central role in shaping social perceptions, reinforcing or challenging gender norms, and influencing the values and identities of children within diverse cultural settings. As technological advancements continue to transform the media landscape, the implications for how children interact with media, and how these interactions mediate their understanding of gender roles and cultural narratives, have become increasingly significant.

The media, both traditional and digital, are not merely channels of information but powerful institutions that frame cultural meanings and social practices. They serve as arenas where gender ideologies are produced, reproduced, and sometimes contested (Gill, 2007). From children's television programs and advertisements to online games and social media, representations of gender are often laden with stereotypes that shape young audiences'

understandings of masculinity and femininity. For instance, research shows that girls are often portrayed in passive, appearance-focused roles, while boys are depicted as active, dominant, and adventurous (Lemish, 2010). Such portrayals contribute to the socialization of children into culturally sanctioned gender roles, with implications for their self-perceptions, aspirations, and interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, cultural context significantly mediates how media messages are interpreted and internalized. While global media flows expose children to transnational content, local cultural norms and values still shape the reception and meaning-making processes. Studies have highlighted the complexities of these interactions, noting that children do not passively absorb media messages but actively negotiate them within their cultural realities (Banaji, 2011). This underscores the importance of considering both global and local dimensions in analyzing how media shape children's understanding of gender and culture.

There is also growing concern about the implications of media consumption on children's well-being and development. Media literacy scholars advocate for empowering children with critical tools to interpret media messages, especially in contexts where gendered and cultural representations may perpetuate exclusion, inequality, or harmful norms (Kellner & Share, 2007). As cultural practices evolve and digital technologies become more embedded in everyday life, the need to foster media environments that promote equity, inclusion, and diversity becomes ever more urgent.

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The intersection of media, gender, children, and culture presents a dynamic and complex field of study. It calls for interdisciplinary approaches that take into account the shifting media ecology, the cultural embeddedness of gender norms, and the agency of children as media users. Understanding this nexus is crucial not only for academic inquiry but also for policy, education, and media production aimed at fostering more inclusive and equitable societies. The way, manner and frequency in which women-related issues are reported has been a matter of interest to many researchers over the years. Most African societies are patriarchal in nature. This is a system, which perpetuates male domination and female inferiority. In addition, the social structure is continuously reinforced through male domination and control of all institutions including the family, educational system, religion, government and of course the media (UNESCO, 1980).

As more and more women entered the labour force, the traditional barrier that once prevented women from participating in public affairs has been reducing. Women's progress in formal employment sector has brought positive changes in the economic, social and political spheres, in spite of the attendant role conflicts. Most women are now better-educated and better-placed to take care of their problems. This development, which ideally should have been reflected by the media, has been largely ignored. Instead, the mass media content mostly portrays women in stereotypic forms. This dilemma has persisted in spite of women's presence as journalists working within media organizations. This fact inspires this research of the study of media and gender.

II. Review of Literatures

This paper is moored on Feminism Theory. The history of feminism started outside the academia then it moved to acquire theoretical and academic stand. the history of feminisms and media studies of the 1970's demands changing in women media image, economic and social

status. Some feminists suggested a definition of feminism as “the voicing of ‘women’ from the side of ‘women’”. Much of the early work on feminism from the 1970s whether coming from a Marxist-feminist or liberal feminist perspective, made three key assumptions as (Tuchman, 1979) summarized thus:

1. Few women hold positions of power in media organizations, and so: addition to its role on history and cultural heritage. These portrayals of men gave raise to feminism and other such social construct to right the wrongs meted out to women.
2. The content of media distorts women’s status in the social world. The media do not present women who are viable role models, and therefore:
3. The media’s deleterious role models, when internalized, prevent and impede female accomplishments. They also encourage both women and men to define women in terms of men (as sex objects) or in the context of family as (wives and mothers).

Feminism experience a turning point from 1990, a moment when the focus of feminist interest shifts from a concern in social and ideological power structures to a self-reflexive, and sometimes self-dismantling, concern with individual bodies and subjectivities. The new popular feminism portrays something different from the “frumpy, frustrated, strident figure”. In a range of US popular TV drama series like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002), *Sex and the City* (1998-2004) all featuring young, independent, single white women in an urban environment, there is an engagement with feminist issues. Feminism itself, with its emphasis on a collective politics, is seen to belong to the past; what characterize the postfeminist woman of popular culture are individualism, sophistication and choice (Vitalis et al., 2023). Liberal feminism, socialist feminism, lesbian feminism, third-world feminism – are grounded in embodied identity groupings (Maiwada et al., 2025). Yet others “first-, second-, or third wave feminism” are founded on notions of historical moments.

Feminists in the UK and USA who were arguing for a more progressive and egalitarian definitions of womanhood complained bitterly that the newspapers and magazines of the day either ridiculed or ignored the so-called “New-Women’ women who sought greater social, educational, political and economic rights (Vitalis et al., 2024). The suffragists (or first wave feminists) of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were nearly unanimous in calling for the establishment of their own periodicals which many regarded as being crucial to the political campaigns around increased rights for women.

III. Research Methods

3.1 Conceptualising Gender

Ordinarily, gender is an English word for classifying nouns into male, female or neuter. However, its present usage specifically refers to the social construct of the relationship between male and female in terms of roles, such that certain roles are seen exclusively females’ and others for males’. This clearly states that even though gender refers to male or female, the society choose to refer gender to the roles either male or female play in any given setting. Not only that, there seems to be a defined demarcation or boundaries so that each stay within those specifications, and mostly, to the detriment of women. Gupta in Idyorough (2005) posits that gender refers to the widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate male and female behavior, characteristics and roles. Going by above, we will understand that gender has now become a social construct, that whenever it is referred to, the logical meaning is what differentiate men and women, and also what defines the ways in which women and men interact with each other within the society.

It should be noted that sex is different from gender. While sex refers to the biological make-up and physical attributes of both male and female, gender is specifically concerned with allocation of roles and expectation, for both men and women in any given society. Thus, gender issues are not women alone. Rather they are the attendant power relations between the sexes. Oakley suggested that gender is not a direct product of biological sex. She defined sex as the anatomical and physiological characteristics which signify maleness and femaleness. And gender as socially constructed masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity are defined not by biology but by social, cultural and psychological attributes which are acquired through becoming a man or a woman in a particular society at a particular time. From the above submissions, it should be noted that gender is particularly concerned with how men and women are seen in the social realm and the duties/responsibilities assigned to both social groups by any given society, at a point in time. Interestingly, the issue of gender is a worldwide thing cutting across countries and races.

3.2 Understanding the Media

Central to this world view and role allocation to both men and women is the media, which interestingly forms the other component of this paper. When discussing the media and gender we will first look at media components, what they do, their audience, the messages they carry and their portrayal of women whether as key players in the media industry or recipients of mass mediated programmes. Littlejohn (in Daramola 2003, p75) said central to any study of mass communications are the media. 'Media' to him are 'organizations that distribute cultural products and messages that affect and reflect the culture of society'. In other words, the mass media can be seen as a means of communication that operates on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in the society to a greater or lesser extent.

It is hard to quantify the power of the media. Millions of people depend on the mass media for information and entertainment. More than that, there is increasing evidence that the media have the power to make people see things differently. Especially television, its undeniable fascination and appeal, its ability to bring the world into our homes and to make us respond emotionally as well as rationally, leads to its awesome power.

Asemah (2011) observes that mass media is one of the socializing institutions in the society that can facilitate the promotion of culture. That socialization through the media can be used to standardize culture throughout all social levels of society. The mass media, therefore, has an important role to play specifically on how individuals construct their social identities, how they perceive differences in sex, culture, race, religion, etc. All is shaped by text produced by the media for audiences that are increasingly segmented by the social constructions of race and gender. Media in short are central to what ultimately come to represent our social realities. According to Kafiris (2005), the media provide a lot of information about what it means to be a woman or man and about gender roles in the public and private spheres. This proves that relationships exist between media and gender, as the former influence the later.

3.3 Children's Agency in Media Use

Children's engagement with media has evolved significantly in the context of digital transformation, prompting a rethinking of their role from passive recipients to active participants. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes children's agency, their capacity to interpret, negotiate, and appropriate media content in ways that are meaningful within their own socio-cultural contexts (Onyejelem, 2023). This shift reflects broader changes in how childhood is understood, highlighting children's ability to act intentionally and influence their environments, including the media they consume. One of the foundational shifts in media studies is the

movement away from deterministic models of media effects toward approaches that foreground children's interpretive capabilities. Livingstone (2002) argues that children are “active audiences” who bring their own experiences, identities, and cultural understandings into their media interactions. Rather than being simply influenced by media messages, children engage with content selectively, question narratives, and often repurpose media in line with their own realities and aspirations. This perspective is further supported by Buckingham (2003), who notes that children use media not just for entertainment, but as a resource for self-expression, identity formation, and social interaction.

Studies on digital media use like Mascheroni and Holloway (2019) highlight the nuanced ways in which children assert their agency across platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and gaming environments. Third et al. (2019) document how children creatively use digital tools to explore identities, communicate with peers, and even advocate on social issues, reflecting a more empowered relationship with media than traditionally assumed. In their multi-country study, they emphasize that children are not merely consumers of digital content but also producers and curators of their own media ecosystems. This active engagement is particularly evident in contexts where children produce content that challenges dominant narratives or seeks to assert their voice in public discourse.

However, children's media agency is not exercised in a vacuum. It is shaped by structural conditions such as access, parental mediation, education, and socio-economic status. For instance, while some children can freely navigate and critically engage with media, others face digital divides that limit their ability to exercise agency fully. Moreover, cultural expectations about childhood, gender, and authority influence how agency is perceived and supported. In some societies, children's media use is heavily monitored, which may constrain their autonomy, while in others, there is more openness to allowing children to explore media independently (Banaji & Buckingham, 2010).

Communication scholars like Nwafor et al., (2024) also caution against overly romanticizing children's agency, arguing that while children may exercise choice and creativity, their media use is still embedded within broader power relations and commercial interests. For example, YouTube influencers and algorithm-driven content often subtly guide children's choices, shaping what they see and how they engage. Thus, while children are not passive, their agency is negotiated within a media environment that includes both opportunities for empowerment and risks of exploitation or manipulation. In educational and policy contexts, acknowledging children's agency has led to greater emphasis on participatory approaches, where children are included in the design and evaluation of media literacy initiatives. This participatory ethos aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms children's rights to expression, information, and participation in matters that affect them.

As such, media literacy programs now increasingly seek to not only protect children from media harms but also empower them to become critical thinkers, ethical producers, and active citizens in a media-saturated world (Kellner & Share, 2019). Literature on children's agency in media use underscores a paradigmatic shift in understanding children as capable, creative, and critical media users. While their agency is shaped by cultural, technological, and socio-economic contexts, children are far from passive in their interactions with media. They are active participants who engage, resist, co-create, and innovate, making the media an integral part of their social and cultural lives.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Discussion on Children and Women in the Society

The relationship between children and the media is multifaceted, dynamic, and evolving in tandem with technological advancements and cultural transformations. Media encompassing television, radio, print, digital platforms, video games, and social media serve as both a site of learning and a domain of socialization for children. This interaction has generated substantial academic and policy interest due to the powerful influence media have on children's development, behavior, identity formation, and social engagement. Traditionally, media were viewed through a deterministic lens, where children were considered passive recipients of media messages, susceptible to both beneficial and harmful effects. Early research often focused on concerns about violence, consumerism, and moral decline, particularly in television and video game content (Anderson et al., 2003). This perspective informed regulatory and parental control approaches that prioritized protection over participation.

However, more recent scholarship emphasizes a constructivist and participatory approach, recognizing children as active users of media who interpret, negotiate, and sometimes resist media content in diverse ways. Livingstone (2002) and Buckingham (2003) argue that children bring their own cultural knowledge, experiences, and agency to their engagement with media, shaping how they understand messages about identity, relationships, power, and the world around them. For example, while media may portray gender stereotypes, children are capable of critically engaging with these portrayals, especially when supported by media literacy education.

The cultural and socio-economic contexts in which children engage with media cannot be overlooked. Access to media technologies, parental mediation, language, and educational background all influence how children use and interpret media (Onyejelem et al., 2024). In Global South contexts, for instance, media access may be more limited or regulated, but mobile technology has enabled children to engage with digital content in informal and highly adaptive ways (Oreoluwa et al., 2024). In these settings, children often navigate media within local cultural logics that may differ significantly from Western-centric models of media influence. Moreover, the content children engage with often reflects dominant cultural values and globalized norms. Media globalization has introduced children to diverse worldviews, but it also risks promoting cultural homogenization and marginalizing indigenous perspectives. Thus, Children's relationship with media is complex, shaped by historical shifts in media technology, cultural practices, and socio-political structures. While media can offer powerful tools for learning, creativity, and participation, they also present risks related to stereotyping, surveillance, and exclusion.

According to the 2006 census conducted by the National Population Commission of Nigeria (NPC) women constitute about 68 million of Nigeria's 140 million people, but the position of women in the country has been rated low in education health, literacy, and employment opportunities amongst others. Women are also excluded from access to the major means of production and are marginalized in the political arena though there are improvements in the last few decades (ibid). Similarly, available employment data indicates that women have become increasingly favoured in the non-agricultural sector. The General Household Surveys of the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) indicate that the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector stood at 46% in 1996 but increased to 62% by 1997 and stabilized around this figure up to 2004 (Millennium Development Goals, 2005). This proportion includes women employed as professionals as well as those involved in media or media related jobs. Yet,

there are still agitations for gender, equity and women inclusion in all spheres of public endeavor even today.

The study derives impetus from studies done on women and gender issues. These studies advocate for an urgent need to seriously consider the problems and issues surrounding the reconstruction and representation of women and women issues within patriarchal discourse of the media. A research endeavour which seeks to unravel continued over reliance on men as experts by the media, with a view to raising policy issues on such anomalies is both significant and relevant. The goal is to draw the attention of the media organizations in general and women journalists in particular for the need to address development-oriented issues in the women pages and women programmes. By so doing, the images will be positively defined, closer to reality and much less sexist. Thus, promoting a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

While early researches were more concerned with directly comparing the coverage of women and men in the media through the number and type of references made to each sex, more recent research has concentrated on the media's agenda - setting role (Gallagher, 1992). That is what is included and given prominence, and what is not. The power of the media extends not only to what is covered, but also what is omitted (Damingo, 1995). It is not up to media to campaign for women's equality, it would be inappropriate, and a dangerous incursion into press freedom. But in the current situation, one sex is being favoured out of all proportion to reality.

For instance, radio is arguably the most accessible of the mass media and in most developing countries plays a more important role than any other medium. In Nigeria a 1992 study found that 96 per cent of the women studied – 65 per cent of whom were illiterate had access to radio within their households or compound, and 59 per cent within their own rooms. Over two-thirds of the women listened to radio daily (Imam, 1992). It is clear that, as in other media, a male view of the world has dominated radio and lead to women being marginalized. Women are primarily heard on radio soap operas, songs, or women's programmes. They do not feature heavily on the news, talkback radio, where people can phone-in to put across their point of view on the subjects being discussed, has become commonplace in the developed world. However, it is still largely male voices that are heard giving opinions (Damingo, 1995).

In newspaper coverage, even where a woman well known in her profession is interviewed, the accompanying photo will often be taking her sitting at home, or somewhere that provides no visual link with her career (ibid). Women get more mention in newspapers as reporters than as interview subjects. Women rarely feature as the main subjects of the story or article, and even less commonly as experts. Several women the world over made it big in media, the reality is that women being front-liners in media remains a novelty (Damingo, 2004). Women are still mostly talents, not major players, leaders, senior editors, managers, network owners or publishers. While more young women are seen to enter the industry, the reason seems to lie more in the glamour associated with this profession that is a close cousin to showbiz.

The fact is, for all the visibility of women in the media industry, very few of them exercise enough clout or influence to shape the final product. The ownership has remained firmly in the grip of men who have had a head start in accessing and controlling the world's resources. Management positions continue to be dominated by men. Nearly 60 percent of the women journalists from around the world who responded to a 1997 International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) survey said that not even one out of ten decision-makers in their companies was a woman (Damingo, 2004). Several factors account for this skewed ratio that

inadvertently makes for a “manstream” media where the perspective is naturally and predominantly male. Being on call at all times especially during crisis situations and being assigned at a moment’s notice to cover breaking news routine in media. Long and irregular hours can discourage many women from staying in the media for the long haul because the routine is incompatible with their family obligations,

In some organizations, soft news beats such as: health, education, science, agriculture, environment are usually assigned to women, while hard news beats: politics, economy, business, defense are routinely given to male reporters. Hard news stories often land on the front page giving their writers (usually male) added career boost and eventually propelling them to top editorial positions (Damingo, 2004). In Nigerian context for example, most of the media organizations are owned and controlled by men, Reymond Dokpesi owns African International Television (AIT), Bola Ahmad Tinubu (TVC) Kabiru Mustapha Yusuf (Media Trust Limited) Sam Nda Isiah (Leadership papers), etc. Even the few women that are working in media houses are not actively involved in efforts to empower women and to raise or address important issues concerning their interest and development. Contrary to this expectation, majority of the female journalist seem to be engaged in reporting domestic matters and entertainment. Indeed, most women pages in Nigerian newspapers seem to emphasize issues relating to cooking, gossip, love stories, fashion/beauty, decoration and the like.

Pate (1994) submits that the majority of women journalists in Nigeria are engaged in stereotype beats of gossips, domestic issues, scandals and the like. According to him, they glamorize sex, love and sensation thus reinforcing the established image in dominant consensus. As a result of this trend audience too has come to prefer women reporters in social events than in more serious aspects of life.

4.2 Images of Women as Presented by Women Working in the Media

As producers of women images, media women might be expected to ‘hold the fort and blaze the trail’ in balanced, informative and researched reporting of women and women’s issues. However the dynamics of political economy of gender situation render such expectation almost groundless. Firstly, working for male dominated media establishments, women in the media are inevitably constrained by the dictates of their working environment. Secondly, as members of the society who by and large accept the norms, they themselves are often bound by society’s image of women. Nevertheless, the dynamics of raised female consciousness perforce has made its impact.

Similarly, majority of female journalists seem to reinforce and emphasize entertainment and other domestic matters, rather than factual programming. For Ikem (1996), women stereotyped are reinforced by utilizing the women’s pages for cooking and nursery affairs instead of more general and profound issues. Hakim (1993) shows that gender segregation not only separate out women from men job within the labour market but it also operate within organizations, with women concentrated at the lowest levels of organizational hierarchies and men concentrated at the top. For example, in China even though women constitute one third (1/3) of the countries forty thousand journalist (40,000) only four percent (4%) of them work in management positions. In newspapers only three and half 3.5% are editors in chief.

Thus, it has been established that the media has a strong role in the distribution of roles between men and women. However, when it comes to gender portrayal in the media, it could be said that the media has not been fair in its portrayal of women and girls. The MediaWatch, for

example, A Canadian not-for-profit feminist organization has noted some distinct trends in media portrayal of women, which among are:

- a. Superiority and Domination: Many media depictions suggest that women should be passive, weak and sexually available, while poses, camera angles and other techniques reinforce the idea that it is natural for men to dominate women in the world.
- b. Dismemberment: Advertisement contents mostly markets separate parts of a woman's body: a disembodied pair of legs, cleavages, eyes, lips, etc. the cumulative effect of which equates women's bodies with products to be bought and sold, and creates the perception that women are not whole human beings but sexualized parts.
- c. Clowning and exaggeration: Women in the media are frequently shown in extremely unrealistic or unnatural position that make them look silly or childish and not to be taken seriously. In contrast, men are usually portrayed as serious, powerful, strong and often, introspective. This reinforces existing social biases about our respective roles and responsibilities.
- d. Male approval: the notion that male approval is the most important measure of women's achievement is extremely limiting, especially since men in the media appear to approve only of sexually attractive and available women. This also fosters competition among women for that male approval.
- e. Voice of authority: Men's lower-pitched voices are often used in dramatic narration and commercial voice overs because advertisers consider them to be more authoritative. But women are equally capable of assuming authority.
- f. Irrelevant sexualisation of women and girls: No matter what the product is, sex is used to sell, be it alcohol, soft drinks, cosmetics, clothes, etc. thus women bodies are often marketed along with the product.

When we study contemporary media content, we will find out that all above assertions are true be it in news content or advertising, public relations, films or theatre arts. In fact, women are reduced to mere sexual objects by the media. This is so because the media shape perception of its audience as well as set the agenda for them. Daramola (2003) averred that central to any study of Mass Communication are the media. "Media" to him are "organizations that distribute cultural products and messages that affect and reflect the culture of society" (Daramola, 2003, p72). It is pertinent to note that gender issues stand out conspicuously be it in the film industry or news content, advert, public relations or electronic media content and management.

Feminist research into the media has shown that women tend to be shown as submissive, passive and largely in terms of their sexuality or domesticity, while men tend to be shown as dominant, active and authoritative (Tuchman et. al; 1978). Similarly, research into media representations reveals media's tendency to perpetuate injustice and exploitation by portraying women in negative and subordinating roles. Most of these scholars argued that the media do not simply reflect positions of women; they are one site of the construction of definitions. Citing data from South Africa, a UNESCO report points that

The South African media give very little space to the views of women, and when it comes to subjects such as politics, economy, sports or agriculture, their voice is virtually unheard. Women journalists are, however, given more exposure than men in reporting subjects that have to do with the body, home and beauty (UNESCO, 2003, p. 1).

Renzitti and Curran (1999) submit that women are 'ignored, trivialized or condemned' by a media which pretends that they exist. For instance, the abuse of women's sexuality in

advertising and misrepresentations where women are portrayed as simply a “body” whose sexuality is exploited in advertising to sell cars, alcohol, perfumes and other products. The content of most media messages relating to women negate the principles on which press freedom was founded that is; truth and objectivity. Instead of media helping women to achieve equality, they tend rather to reinforce traditional attitudes, often portraying an image of women that is degrading and humiliating and fails to reflect the changing roles of the sexes. In other words the mass media in their institutional character in the society help greatly in promoting the traditional “sex object” stereotypical image of women in the society.

4.3 Gender Disparity in the Global Media

Despite this picture painted above, it is disheartening to note that “in many countries, the cultural underpinnings of gender inequality and discrimination against women are reinforced through the media” (GMMP). Women are depicted as objects of “viewing pleasure, and or enjoying the pleasure of being looked at”. Global Media Monitoring Project Report (2010) indicates a “symbolic annihilation” of women in the global media map with only 24% while their male counterpart dominated with landslide margin of 76%.

Joseph and Sharma observe:

Women’s issues are usually not the stuff of which headlines are made. Nor are gender-related concerns considered good copy. When such questions do draw the attention of the media, they are often sensationalized, trivialized or otherwise distorted. In a nut shell, their coverage can be summed up as a series of hits and misses.... of course, women also make it to the news pages and bulletins as victims of crimes or conflict, disaster or atrocities and occasionally, as recipients of charity or beneficiaries of social welfare or income-generation programmes (Joseph & Sharma, 2006, p. 92).

The general picture depicted women in the global media map consisted in soft and domestic matters like fashion and entertainment (Sanda, 2010), with women journalists covering ‘stereotyped beats of gossip, domestic issues, love and sensation (Pate 1994) or kitchen and children Affairs. In 2010, GMMP published its findings on stories by female reporters as follows:

Region	Newspaper	Radio	Television
Africa	24%	38%	36%
Asia	33%	35%	47%
Caribbean	48%	26%	51%
Europe	31%	40%	42%
Latin America	45%	38%	35%
Middle East	38%	29%	29%
North America	34%	29%	33%
Pacific	43%	42%	31%

The following table shows media’s contribution to gender stereotypes, by region in 2010.

Region	Topic Reinforces Stereotypes	Neither challenges nor reinforces	Clearly challenges stereotypes
Africa	77%	18%	5%
Asia	42%	53%	5%
Caribbean	39%	55%	6%
Europe	46%	49%	4%
Latin America	30%	57%	13%
Middle East	81%	14%	4%

North America	61%	30%	9%
Pacific	10%	88%	2%

Source: (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010).

4.4 Stereotypical Portrayals of Women and Men

Generally, the media continue to present both men and women in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities. Typical men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in relationships. However, women are portrayed as sex objects who must strive to remain young and desirable, passive and dependents, incompetent and dumb. Thus, female characters devote greater part of their lives trying to improve on appearances, taking care of home and people around them. For the simple fact that the media pervade our lives, this misrepresentation of gender on its part tend to register in our ways of doing things such that we have a distorted perception of what is normal and desirable for both men and women.

However, the reality is that men and women could be different in terms of physique, but they could perform equal roles as opposed to media depictions that have now become the social reality. According to Doyle (1989), whose research focuses on masculinity, children’s television typically shows males as aggressive, dominant and engaged in exciting activities from which they receive rewards from other for their “masculine accomplishments” (Doyle,1989, p111). Relatedly, recent studies reveal that the majority of men on prime-time television are independent, aggressive and in charge. Television programming for all ages disproportionately depicts men as serious, confident, competent, powerful and able to achieve high status and positions. ‘Gentleness’ in men which is briefly evident in the 1970’s, has receded as established male characters are redrawn to be more tough and distanced from others. This assertion is evident in popular films like Lethal Weapon, Predator, Diehard, Total Recall, Days of Thunder, etc., where men are starred as macho, hard, independent, sexually aggressive and unafraid.

In contrast, as reported by Brown and Campbell in Joseph and Sharma (2008) men are seldom shown doing house chore which reinforce the fact that such chores are for women, the weaker sex. Doyle (1986) notes that boys and men are rarely presented as caring for other. Horovitz (1989) points out that men are typically presented as incompetent in homemaking, cooking and child care. This is apparent as there are adverts on cooking and cleaning supplies portray men as incompetent in cooking and cleaning cooking wares, while they are no better at taking care of children. The case is different where woken portrayal in the media is concerned, which evidently depicts reality.

However, media representation studies reveal the media’s tendency to perpetuate injustice and exploitation by portraying women in negative, subordinate and humiliating roles. Media images of women also reflect these stereotypes that deviate from reality. Davis (1990) for example posits that women are portrayed as significantly younger and thinner than women in the population as a whole, and most are depicted as passive, dependent on men and enmeshed in relationships or housework. The requirements of youth and beauty in women even influence new shows, where newscasters are expected to be younger, more physically attractive and less outspoken than males.

V. Conclusion

In this contestation, it could be deduced that women are underrepresented in the media globally. Thus, it is not peculiar to third world countries, although it is more pronounced, more conspicuous there. This could be because of the patriarchal nature of African societies, and its cultures and norms. For instance, women are hardly visible in the scheme of life. Media being a societal mirror reflects the reality of society, so in its contents and programmes, the media helped in reinforcing this values that places the woman in a subservient position to the man. Not only that, media content and ownership do not really recognize the woman as an equal partner to the man. As such, the feminists' agitations for gender equality, women's right and all other such construct are reflective of this misdemeanor.

Consequently, media should broaden its scope to be more inclusive of women, for a better society. Feminism is an activism that strives to assert the voice of women from the women angle. It has brought some changes from many angles, this has given womanhood a lift, despite that the reportage is still not balanced between the two sexes. In this context, children's position in relation to the media is no longer confined to passive viewership but reflects a complex interplay of agency, cultural context, and digital innovation. As both consumers and creators, children actively engage with media to explore identities, form relationships, and navigate their social worlds. While media offer opportunities for learning, self-expression, and civic participation, they also pose challenges related to stereotyping, digital inequality, and commercialization.

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