

# Introduction

Guest editors Elisabeth Eide and Gita Bamezai examine the issue of gender literacy and seek to improve gender perspectives in media and journalism studies programmes in particular.

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## Building gender literacy

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### Abstract

This article presents a variety of angles from which to study and teach gender perspectives in journalism studies. It includes representation, both quantitatively and qualitatively, focusing on under-representation and stereotypes. It presents features of news outlet leadership and staff composition as well as gendered division of labour within the newsroom, and it addresses deep-rooted journalistic and academic cultures, which may serve as an obstacle for women entering the profession, both in news media and within institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, it addresses the need to be inventive and creative in addressing the challenges posed by these traditions, not least the challenge of digital media with their new opportunities both for development and misogyny.

It concludes with some recommendations for educators within the field, supplementing the four contributions of this special issue.

**Key words:** gender mainstreaming, gendered journalism, journalist education, marginalization, misrepresentation.

## Improving gender perspectives in journalism studies

**Marginalization and misrepresentation have been recurring issues in media critique, and in this issue/volume, we ask whether institutions educating journalists and media professionals take this seriously, and highlight a variety of ways to address the intersection of gender and journalism in higher education.**

Oftentimes, when the gender concept is applied, there is a tacit understanding that it is mainly about women, also in journalism and journalism studies. Historically, as this issue also shows, most of the time, gender issues are raised by women, be it within news content or in higher education. This tacit understanding has to do with the existing inequality regarding many aspects within the field of journalism. This article presents several studies, which show that men still are dominant in the media output across the planet, as well as in leadership positions and thus have much of the power to define what important news is. Still, when we refer to “gender perspectives” it has to do with inclusiveness of approach and treatment. We recognize the importance of addressing a broad range of gender perspectives, while realizing that female journalism educators and researchers have been and most likely will be in the forefront of addressing marginalization and misrepresentation issues in the media.

Educational programs may integrate gender and journalism in several creative and critical ways. This article presents an overview of perspectives, which may be addressed when teaching journalism students, taking into account different streams of learning, skill and research. Herein, we present four contributions from authors originating from three continents, which in different ways underpin the importance of linking journalism education and professional practice. It concludes with some advices on how to face challenges of gender mainstreaming as a transformative process in education and practice of journalism.

### Gender representation

Any progress in gender mainstreaming has been only marginal and as Gallagher (2014) suggests, media’s response in many ways has been extrinsic rather than organic since it rests primarily on ‘feminist vocabulary’. The narrative is built around women’s individual choice, ‘empowerment’ and personal freedom, making it an exclusive positioning not leading to structural changes or as a social movement (Gallagher, 2014; Fraser, 2013).

The most widespread critique has addressed representation, primarily male dominance in the media output. Representation may also have to do with staff composition in the newsroom, or among editors. However, here we limit the concept to analyses of media output, both quantitatively and qualitatively. One author (EE) remembers a conversation in Paris in 1980, where a writer presumed that if a visitor from the planet Mars landed on planet Earth and was lead into a room filled with newspapers, it would think that the population of our planet was overwhelmingly male. Research from different parts of the world has proven this writer to be close to the truth.

Many local projects in the west have demonstrated the gender gap in media content (Carlsson, 1993; van Zoonen, 1994; Carter et al 1998; Gallagher, 2001; Carter et al, 2013). An overwhelming concern regarding these trends has largely remained un-investigated by researchers in non-Western countries, even though the extent of discrimination may be comparable or greater in these countries (Ceulemans & Fauconnier, 1979).

Hence, in 1994, the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) was born. Thus, every fifth year from 1995, investigations of this gap took place in an increasing number of countries. In 2015, researchers from 114 countries participated, and the results were widely disseminated.<sup>1</sup> The results prove slow progress from the outset; in 2015, only 24 percent of the news subjects (people interviewed, or whom the news are about) were women (Macharia, 2015). This result is the same as in 2010, while in 1995; the total was 17 per cent (ibid.). The report also brings detailed information on the gender gap among those reporting the news (including age bias for TV presenters), as well as for example on who is given the role of expertise, spokesperson, eyewitness, victim, etc. A pan-India ICSSR study of the media content across all genres and media amply demonstrated that along with some changes, hangover of the old stereotypes remained. Reasons of fewer women seen as experts in news media reflected existing biases of undermining women's knowledge and engendering controlling and authoritative aspects of masculinity (Bamezai, et al, 2020).

These many-faceted results may serve as revelations to journalism students who need to be initiated into news-making and news-meaning to apprise them about aspects of gender misrepresentation and misinformation. To supplement them with more in-depth recognition, we may envisage educator-initiated student projects, through which the students themselves conduct small investigations of the news content on one particular day, or through a selected week. Our experiences show that people easily assume the gender representation to be more balanced than it actually is. Thus, gaining concrete experiences through actual quantitative research – learning by doing – is a way of enhancing gender literacy among students.

## Roles and Stereotypes

The media both reflects and shapes social norms and values. Despite this penetrating influence, their impact on gender related norms and practices as well as women's engagement in media bodies receives limited attention in research, data collection and analysis (Clarke, 2015). Empirical studies suggest how certain socially constructed roles come across in the media output. According to the 2015 GMMP report (Macharia, 2015), men represent 79 per cent of the news subjects who occur as experts in the news media output, and 80 per cent of those who occur as spokespersons, i.e. in both cases higher than the proportion of men/women as news subjects (76/24). These numbers reflect the relative marginalization of women in leading positions and the elite bias of mainstream media. Concomitantly, it could also indicate another bias, that of neglecting women as expertise by adhering to the 'usual suspects' when it comes to journalist sources.

However, critique of representation is not limited to quantitative content analysis. If we only do counting and disregard how women are represented, for example as sexualised objects, the results may be misleading. To achieve gender equality in media, media leaders and reporters need to be aware of presenting women and men in a broad range of roles (Djerf-Pierre & Edström 2020).

Thus, ways of representation, not least stereotyping, is a central part. Much research (GMMP, Eide, 2000; Eide & Orgeret, 2015, Bamezai, et al. 2020a) has demonstrated how women are portrayed with more emphasis on looks (dressing, makeup, body) and family responsibilities than men. The GMMP 2015 report concludes that only four per cent of the stories monitored across the planet explicitly challenge gender stereotypes, furthermore that women reporters are at least twice as likely to challenge such stereotypes, as are their male colleagues. Producers, particularly in some regions, may still 'consider the physical appearance of female journalists a key marketing tool for their networks' (Macharia, 2015), and 'gender stereotypes within newsrooms means women continue to face challenges in accessing the profession and in growing into managerial positions within it' (ibid.). Research also reveal that women politicians, also in top positions,

[...] 'are not only under-reported, but when they do feature in news discourse, they are often trivialised, sexualised, or commodified, their sex seeming to be the most interesting thing about them from the perspective of journalists' (Ross et al., 2020: p. 233).

Men may also be stereotyped, as overly tough and dominant, without regard for caring and family matters. Thus, there are ample reasons to supplement quantitative exercises with emphasis on stereotypes of both women and men as an important part of building gender literacy. This may also be a way to address the problem of recruiting male students to gender and media/journalism studies, a challenge highlighted by Nakiwala and Namasinga Selnes in this volume, but which is not specific to Uganda.

<sup>1</sup> <http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp> Read 22.11.2020

## Participation: leadership, recruitment and division of labour

A large number of the world's media leaders are men. Changes are slow at the top level. Although recruitment to journalism and media education is undergoing a process of feminization, it seems that a lesser proportion of female students actually enter the newsrooms and attain leadership positions. Other studies indicate that female journalists stay for a shorter period within the profession and that a larger proportion remains unmarried (Melki & Mallat, 2016). Studies in the Asian region confirm a similar intransigent situation as major decision-making positions are out of reach for many women, and although some do make it to the top, yet incremental changes are occurring too slowly for the real change. As modern corporate organizations, media are dominated by the men and the owners of media organizations prefer to give higher posts to men (Bamezai et al. 2020a). 'The Research Study on Media and Gender in Asia-Pacific : Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu' shows that media companies are largely led and governed by men – most editors are male, as are owners of news media, with women more likely to be in mid-level rather than top management (Gurumurthy, 2015)

In many contexts, "perceptions persist [...] that journalism is not an 'appropriate' profession for women, resulting in sometimes severe social pressure not to enter the profession, or leave it" (Chocarro, 2019). The report *Media and Gender in India* (IFJ, 2015) found that while the media was going through a phase of continuous growth in India, women were increasingly making up a strong component of the industry. Yet to make their voices heard and defy stereotypes, increasingly they had to work differently by settling for part-time, or contractual work or with low salaries.

The upend in the status of women journalists is significantly undergoing change as the GMMP reports (Macharia, 2015) show that the number of reporters behind the stories monitored in a 20-year period, (1995-2015) has increased from 28 to 37 per cent suggesting a rising trend of women in the media. Thus, there is a wider range of women with potential for careers within the media houses.

## Awareness of history

In journalism education, it is worthwhile discussing which role models are proposed in the curriculum or as guest lecturers. In Sweden, some decades ago, female media/journalism researchers started the so-called 'Pennskaft' (Quill) project, which aimed at enhancing the experiences of important female pioneers in journalism (Lundgren, 2002; Ney, 1998; Stål, 2002). In Norway, an experienced female reporter already in 1986 wrote a book featuring female journalists, from the first one who, after having shared work with her husband, replaced him as an editor when he was imprisoned in 1851 (Kvaale, 1986). Other projects have highlighted a series of individual female foreign correspondents (Edwards, 1988), and biographies of prominent, individual travelling reporters have been published; for example Mackworth, 1986 (on Isabelle Eberhardt); Geniesse, 2001 (on Freya Stark); Moorehead, 2003 (on Martha Gellhorn).

To branch-out from the pedantic and established structures of journalism practice, many women-organised groups have tried to shift to an egalitarian approach by building constituencies of coalition in the global South. Two well-known such examples are of an international coalition of women journalists, Women's Feature Service (WFS), a unique enterprise dedicated to reporting and writing on development-related issues from a women's perspective in India and Philippines (Gonzales & Misako, 2015). At the micro-level, locally volunteered newspaper, *Khabar Lahirya* run by rural-based women journalists in India is a success story of women enterprise which won the King Sejong Prize 'for its well-structured method of training of newly literate women as journalists and democratizing information production' (Nirantar, 2011).

Many outstanding women journalists have been trailblazers in establishing their credentials in male domains of journalism. Immortalised in a Web Series, *Scam 1992 The Harshad Mehta Story* (2020), Sucheta Dalal as a staff reporter with the Times of India newspaper in 1992 broke the most sensational financial stories, which forever changed the stock business and the banking sector in India<sup>2</sup>. To encourage gender sensitivities and perspectives in media, national level Laadli Media Awards in India facilitate engagement of journalists with gender issues by conferring annual awards to all types of media content, which highlight and position gender issues.

Feminism In India (FII), an award-winning digital intersectional feminist media organisation, is involved in 'educating and developing a feminist sensibility among the youth. FII amplifies the voices of women and

2 : <https://indianjournalismreview.com/2020/11/07/after-scam-1992-> Accessed on November 22

## Leadership gaps

A recent study from Reuter's Institute at Oxford University<sup>4</sup>, including ten countries, reveals that only 23 per cent of the top editors across 200 major outlets were women, while the number of journalists in the same countries was on average, albeit with large variety, 40 per cent. Even in countries where female journalists were in majority (Brazil, Finland); the majority of top editors were men. In Japan, there was not a single woman leader in any major news outlet; while in South Africa, 47 per cent of the top editors were women. According to this research, there is no 'meaningful correlation' between general gender inequality in the societies and the proportion of women in top editorial positions. 'Countries like Germany and South Korea that score well on the UN Gender Inequality Index have very few women among the top editors' (Andi et al., 2020).

This raises a discussion of more targeted efforts to improve the proportion of female leadership, in higher education and elsewhere. The World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA) has established partnerships to deliver e-learning courses such as 'Women in News Media Management' in several countries.<sup>5</sup>

## Interplay and division of labour

A related issue is how work is distributed among editorial staff. Do leaders assign the same kind of tasks to female and male reporters, or does the still existing division of work on the home front follow women into the newsrooms? Do female journalists feel an obligation to take care of the 'soft' issues (Zilliacus-Tikkanen, 1998) such as (health) care, education and culture (including celebrity coverage) fearing that they would otherwise be more neglected? Do editors assign them to these areas, while they to a lesser degree cover crime, sports and national/foreign politics? Do women have to cover all gender issues? These questions have to do with both preferences and values among female vs. male journalists, and with [male] leaders' gendered expectations from journalists entering the newsroom, stemming from the fact that females in many countries outnumber men in caring and educational professions. According to World Bank statistics, two thirds of primary school teachers across the world are women.<sup>6</sup> In the health and social sector, women form 70 per cent of the workers (Boniol et al. 2019).<sup>7</sup>

## Unravelling Gender and Inter-sectionalism

Intersectionality has long been an important approach within social sciences (Fiig, 2010; Gressgård & Jacobsen 2003; Crenshaw, 1989). In our context it means being aware of the interplay between different aspects, such as class, ethnicity/race, disability, religiosity and sexuality and how they may affect journalism, media, and not least media studies. Oftentimes, daily news reporting is not able to address the complexity of events, including socioeconomic background, consequences for citizens and the interplay between some of the above-mentioned factors. As the editors of a new anthology on gender and media suggest,

[...] the meanings and categorisations of gender are continuously evolving; they are culturally and historically situated and often intersect (combine and interact) with other social categories such as race and ethnicity, age, class, and sexuality. (Djerf-Pierre & Edström 2020: p. 12).

Asia presents a huge diversity, and yet, shares many worldwide trends in the media and gender landscape. What Gurumurthy (2015) terms as 'a colonisation from within' points to layered aspects of gender inequi-

3 <https://feminisminindia.com/section/culture/> Accessed on November 23, 2020.

4 Sample: South Africa, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea; Finland, Germany, UK, Mexico, USA, and Brazil. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/women-and-leadership-news-media-2020-evidence-ten-markets> Read 22.11.2020

5 See <http://www.womeninnews.org/certification> Read 22.11.2020

6 [Primary education, teachers \(% female\) | Data \(worldbank.org\)](http://data.worldbank.org/primary-education-teachers-female) Accessed 26.11.2020

7 [19039 Gender equity in the health workforce Working paper For Web.pdf \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/19039-gender-equity-in-the-health-workforce-working-paper-for-web) Accessed 26.11.2020.

ties neglected by media deliberately. Gender based inequality and violence are highly critical concerns, which assume significant proportions if seen from the prism of class, religion and race.

Relevant questions to raise may be whether reporters with minority background are considered especially fit to cover ethnic minority issues (see Yousuf's article in this issue), thus not enhancing collective editorial responsibility; or whether raising gender issues simultaneously imply that other concerns, such as social class and minority background are relegated to the margins. Gender discrimination is an opaque term unless seen from the prism of intersectionality since it fails to capture and appreciate levels of inequities, which women of a different race, class and caste may endure. Absence of gender and racial diversity in most of the media organisation has been an accepted challenge, which has been met with an increasing backsliding by media companies away from demographic parity as newsrooms shrink. Even in sectors such as digital-only newsrooms that show slightly better diversity figures, at the current rate of change, the media industries will never reach parity with the overall population in terms of employment and ownership (Wilson, Costanza-Chock & Forelle, 2016).

Inspiring such discussions among young journalists-to-be in educational programs may at least enhance more conscious future ambitions and choices.

## Newsroom cultures and processes

For decades, media researchers have focused on the elite orientation of news media (Tuchman et al. 1978; Gans, 1980). Top leaders make decisions that affect citizens; thus, such an elite focus has a certain legitimacy. However, journalism's larger social responsibility to highlight the consequences of elite decisions implies also letting the 'experts on consequences' have a voice (Meilby, 1989), since this 'educative' definition of expertise includes the ones whose lives and livelihoods depend much on elite decisions. In elite circles in politics and business, the male dominance in most countries is still strong. At the grass roots, however, the gender distribution is evidently even. Research also shows that local news are somewhat less elite oriented than national outlets (Bjerke et al., 2016).

In today's journalism, many news outlets are struggling to survive and feel compelled to reduce their number of reporters. When being glued to their desks, reporters may be inclined to contact the 'usual' sources, known to 'deliver'. Thus, the elite (male) orientation risk becoming more dominant if media leaders do not take measures to ameliorate such imbalances.

## Which news are important?

Apart from the elite/grass roots discussion, there are other questions worth raising on editorial priorities. Is there a gendered way of deciding what news is? Is it self-evident that crime as news has a priority over for example education and health issues, or that sports news still in many news outlets is a dominant field? Furthermore, within the variety of journalistic subfields, what if female actors (such as sport athletes), are given scant attention compared to their male colleagues? On the other hand, to address topic intersections, is the high priority of sports coverage contributing to a lower representation of women in the news? We may also ask: does the high priority of sports coverage contribute to a lower overall representation of women in the news?

A veteran in gender and media research, Liesbet van Zoonen (1998) has raised the question of feminization of journalism. She defines this by (1) more emphasis on 'human touch' coverage, (2) personification and more emphasis on audience needs and (3) more emotional investment (exemplified by 'tears on TV', *ibid.*). A driving force behind this development may be the hunt for audience/consumers and commercial revenue. In a late-modern society, this implies a focus on the so-called SHEconomy, women consumers increasingly being 'big business' assets by their growing numbers in the paid workforce (Fagerland & Rambøl 2015). Whether this is a global tendency, remains to be researched further. However, as emphasized by Koirala's article in this issue, the recruitment of more female students to journalism education may also be seen as part of the feminization process.

## Newsroom bias

Another salient issue is how women are met – not least when in small minority – in the newsrooms. A recent study from International Media Support (Chocarro, 2019), based on studies of nine countries in the ‘Global South’, concludes that the prevailing culture in newsrooms ‘can be marginalising or even hostile toward women or simply unprepared when it comes to addressing gender specific safety concerns’ (Chocarro, 2019, p. 6). Furthermore, it highlights ‘social and family pressures that may hinder or discourage their work’.<sup>8</sup> In this Special Issue, case studies from both Nepal and Uganda confirm to some of these tendencies also in institutions of higher learning.

## Traditional vs. ‘new media’

The exponential growth of social media in the last decades has changed the whole media landscape in many ways. The unprecedented changes in digital technologies are projected to shape a new architecture of the media industry with inter alia impact on the socio-economic structures and systems. This seemingly democratic access and proliferation of digital platforms are suggestive of tectonic shifts with consequences for the news content and framing of issues. (Bamezai et al. 2020b)

The growing number of outlets has provided citizens with more options when it comes to expression, as well as a ‘training ground’ for accessing the legacy media. The two media sectors converge in several ways, by news media having their own social media accounts. When something ‘goes viral’ on Social media, the legacy media picks it up, and social media actors promote legacy media items. GMMP results demonstrate that when digital news media versions as well as platforms such as twitter are taken into consideration in monitoring media, the gender proportion remains much the same (Macharia, 2015).

The diffusion of the mobile phone and use of virtual space for resistance politics open up new trajectories for political action. Activism arises in spontaneous actions – cascading events in network geographies of dissent. The blogger, the journalist and the “contingent activist” who pushes an SMS or writes a blog – are all part of a complex public sphere, influencing the course of gender debates. (Gurumurthy, 2015)

‘More of the same’ has been the legacy acquired by new forms of content creation with exceeding durability and conviviality. Linda Steiner (2012) speaks of slow changes spurred by marketing concerns in driving the sex-binary packaging of news and construction of women (as readers and reporters) interested in lifestyle issues and domesticity.

The increased options for audience response/comments has also opened up for more harassment of individuals in general and journalists in particular, since the latter depend on daily/weekly visibility. While it took more of an effort to send a letter – or for that matter an email – to an individual reporter/editor in the past, it is today very easy unless the media outlet has closed its comment spaces. Recent studies show that women journalists are particularly affected by online harassment (Reporters Without Borders, 2018; OSCE2019). The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, 2020) reported that women journalists were ‘affected by gender-specific safety risks such as sexual harassment, sexual violence and threats of violence’. More than half of women journalists in a survey covering 400 journalists in 50 countries, reported experiences of sexual harassment, psychological abuse, online trolling and other abuses (IFJ, 2017).

In 2016, *The Guardian* conducted an analysis showing that among the ten staff journalists who received the highest level of abuse comments on Internet, eight were women (four white, four non-white, two gay), while the two others were black men (one gay). Among the eight women, one was a Jew, another one Muslim. The ten reporters who received the least abuse were all men. This speaks to Hani Yousuf’s article in this issue, highlighting the intersections between gender and race/ethnicity.

Research from Norway shows that female and male journalists receive approximately the same amount of harassment, but that threats against female journalists in Norway are more sexualized, including threats of sexual violence, such as rape (Hagen, 2015; for Australian experiences, see North, 2015).

There has been an increasing focus to assess in what ways women journalists experiences in the global south has been different from those of women in the west since large number of women journalists have entered the media profession with the advent of privatisation of media especially TV and entry of web sites in news. In recent years, two major studies, one by UNESCO (Gonzalez & Misako 2015), and early this year

<sup>8</sup> Sample includes: Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Somalia.

by SWAN (South Asian Women's Network, 2020), have reiterated that the region presents an entrenched position of discrimination and marginalisation, although India is one of the few countries which has done well in terms of legislation and securing a more safe place for women.

With few exceptions, women in media face a gender insensitive environment at the workplace, including discrimination, security threats and violence. There is sharp gender inequality in media coverage about women, with high focus on sexual crimes and harassment in the news media content relating to women. Most often, women are stereotyped, belittled and sexually objectified in the news, entertainment and commercial space across all the nine countries monitored.

While addressing harassment and abuse inside the newsroom may be tough (not least if the number of female reporters is minimal/small), it is perhaps more challenging and strenuous to address a digital culture of abuse. We recommend that institutions teaching journalists be in the forefront of addressing these issues, as this may encourage future journalists to challenge such cultures where- and whenever they encounter them and also help their self-confidence, which may easily be affected by much online abuse if they are left to deal with it alone.

## Building gender literacy in journalism education

In countries, where feminist critique has been vocal for a long time, as well as in countries with strong patriarchal traditions, proponents of gender mainstreaming in journalism education may meet serious obstacles. In the first case, it may be a matter of 'gender fatigue', presumed lack of program space, or the sense that equal rights are achieved; in the other perhaps some of the same reactions, plus obstacles based on the wish to preserve male privileges.

There are several ways of addressing these hindrances.

## Widening perspectives

For educators, it is of vital importance to be updated on new research as well as social and technological changes. The authors of this chapter can both remember a time when journalism had to do with manual typewriters and a very complicated news production process (the celebrated movie *The Post* illustrates this process very well).<sup>9</sup> To conduct a gender-journalism course today, without including research on and work with social media, is impossible and would represent a disregard for young students' primary media experiences. In addition, issues such as sexual minorities, trans- and third gender identities are now in many countries high on the political agenda, and thus in need of being addressed within a media context.

The field of masculinity studies is worth considering at least in some programs. This may be a way to attract more students, but also implies a recognition of researchers, who are not hostile to feminism (often-times the contrary), but feel a need to work on different articulations of masculinity both within and outside the (social) media sphere (Craig, 1992; Hoover & Coats, 2015; Salter & Blodgett, 2017). As mentioned above, men may also feel uncomfortable when experiencing being stereotyped by media. As communicated by a Canadian centre, male characters may in many media portrayals be 'rewarded for self-control and the control of others, aggression and violence, financial independence, and physical desirability'.<sup>10</sup> UNESCO, being much concerned with gender and media, has also addressed the issue of male stereotypes (Kareithi, 2014).<sup>11</sup>

## Integrating issues

Neglect of gendered aspects of a phenomenon can create a limited perspective derived from 'the conse-

9 The movie (released 2017) tells about a crucial moment in history (1971) when The Washington Post chose to reveal secrets of the administration's tackling of the Vietnam war, through the Pentagon Papers.

10 <https://mediasmarts.ca/gender-representation/men-and-masculinity/how-media-define-masculinity> Read 21.11.2020

11 [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/publications/gamag\\_research\\_agenda\\_kareithi.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/publications/gamag_research_agenda_kareithi.pdf)

quences of promoting a product-oriented teaching culture instead of a process-focused learning culture' (Deuze, 2006, p. 30). Evidence of sporadic and random gender mainstreaming (GM) in the Journalism courses in universities is largely dependent on an individual teacher's own initiative, more than an intrinsic institutional policy or process. Mere inclusion of gender issues within the journalism studies does not posit major positive outcome in redeeming perceptibly discriminatory conditions in the media practice (Bamezai, et al., 2020b)

However, even if gender is not mainstreamed and included as an intersecting part of courses, gender sensitivity may be addressed in other ways in the teaching programme. One way is by way of specific lectures at the outset of BA and MA programs, by inviting external expertise known for such sensitivity, raising critical inquiry about the existing situation of and by specific student assignments. Another way is continuously asking the question of how issues addressed in course work connect to gender issues/gaps/discrimination. However, integrating existing journalism courses in universities in the Asian subcontinent poses a bigger challenge with the existing variety of courses and programmes on offer, and lack of regulatory mechanism to ward off commercial pulls and pressures. This is also because the graduates from many of these institutions are mostly ill equipped for the newsroom and seem to expect glamour instead of hard commitment on their jobs (Muppidi, 2008).

## Building bridges to the profession and to history

As mentioned above, several NGOs working with media and journalists are serious about gender issues, and these are found locally, too. A network with chapters in a range of countries, such as the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT, founded in 1949-1950) is particularly concerned with supporting and promoting women within the profession, and is no longer confined to audio-visual media. Various local networks of women journalists exist in many countries, while quite a few journalist unions have a gender profile.

If some women journalists have assumed impeccable positions in the global south, it suggests a relentless stride in striking a balance and in making journalism progressive. For more than a decade, female journalist Hajjah Norila was the President of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) of Malaysia (1998 to 2010). Over the years the *Asmita* organisation in Nepal has worked with Sancharika Samuha, (Working Women Journalists) and other organizations that deal with women's issues, on various projects, including media research, training for women journalists and even agenda-setting at the policy level and in the Constituent Assembly. *Uks*, an NGO in Pakistan, has been in the forefront in spearheading the adoption of a Gender-Sensitive Code of Ethics, which clearly defines the standards, attitudes and behaviour expected from presenters, anchors, researchers, producers, scriptwriters, camerapersons, policy-making editorial staff and the senior management of media houses (Gonzalez & Misako, 2015).

SWAN's flagship project "Women for Change: Building a Gendered Media in South Asia", has been coordinating a collective research of nine countries of South Asia. Their research highlights unequal working conditions for women and a retrospective portrayal of women in media. The need to deter, counter and overcome gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment is a crosscutting priority in this project, as an issue that adversely affects every aspect of women's work in media and society.<sup>12</sup> These works are sources of inspiration for journalism educators, which may in turn enhance student awareness of a wider history.

Highlighting early pioneers in the profession on the national as well as the international level may raise the consciousness regarding what students can possibly achieve and work with. However, literature searches reveal that most publications (at least in English) seem to centre on Western journalists. This may indicate that several exciting projects are waiting to be picked up, to enrich the history of the profession in many countries.

## Engaging students in research

Experiences harvested in Norway, reveals that some dedicated students may contribute substantially to research within the field of gender and journalism. Two anthologies on gender, journalism and media (Eide, 2000; Eide & Orgeret 2015) demonstrate how well researched term papers, with some additional supervision, may be published as book chapters. Bringing students into a realm of research is beneficial for all parts,

12 Sikri, Veena; <https://www.swaninterface.net/>

as it helps widen staff-initiated projects, as well as contributing to students' portfolio.

Here, the newly suggested Gender Equality Media Index (GEM-I), may be helpful, presenting six relevant indicators for measuring Gender Equality (Djerf-Pierre & Edström 2020), based on three main indicators: Presence, topics and roles of women and men in the media output (Djerf-Pierre & Edström 2020, p. 68).<sup>13</sup>

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	Total
<b>Presence</b>						
women news subjects or sources	17	19	20	24	24	21
women reporters	38	34	36	38	39	37
<b>Topics</b>						
women news subjects or sources in business & economy news	13	17	17	21	21	18
women news subjects or sources in politics & government news	9	12	13	18	17	15
<b>Role</b>						
women experts as news subjects or sources	–	–	15	21	20	19
women spokespersons as news subjects or sources	–	–	15	20	20	19
<i>n</i> (range)	59–62	63–65	70–75	100–104	102–104	276–410

*Comments:* *n* = country-year observations (outliers with limited data are excluded – six country-year observations). The number of country observations in each cell varies between 59 and 104. All variables are from the GMMP study (1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, & 2015) and the values range between 0 (no women) and 100 (all women). Role indicators are unavailable for 1995 and 2000, and the GEM-I can thus only be calculated for 2005, 2010, and 2015. See Appendix 2.1 for full references to the original variable sources.

*Source:* GMMP

**Table 1:** courtesy of GMMP/Djerf-Pierre & Edström 2020

## Highlighting resources

‘Visibility, voice and influence’ are basic requirements in redeeming women’s position in media but these have remained elusive in many ways even in academic circles (Gallagher, 2010). Ushering in changes in teaching and pedagogy of gender in journalism and media schools is challenging, but not obstructionist since it is pertinent to note that the issue of feminization of journalism has become indispensable to any general empirical study of journalism education (Nordenstreng, 2009). Ross and Padovani’s article in this issue focuses on the challenge of training the current generation of journalism, media and communication students to make them aware of persistent forms of gender-based underrepresentation, silencing, and discrimination in the cultural industries.

An orthodox perspective prevails in many universities, which regard gender in journalism education as limited to a special paper, or at best, student assignments depending on the interest of an individual student. Ross and Padovani lament the lack of spread of gender-focused courses, while even gender perspectives are rarely mainstreamed or integrated into existing courses in many universities. Most courses are offered

<sup>13</sup> The whole anthology is available digitally, Open Access from Nordicom: <https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/publikationer/comparing-gender-and-media-equality-across-globe>

at the undergraduate level and demonstrating a nonchalant approach in treating them mostly as electives, thereby assigning a lower degree of institutional commitment in response to international recommendations for gender mainstreaming.

Lack of resources on gender have led to a listlessness in understanding the imperative of gender mainstreaming in media education in not just the course content but pedagogy and research programme. AGEMI (Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries) fills that void in providing digitised material and a site for exchange of views and other resources for a richer and more engaging learning. It is equally relevant to widen the scope of gender mainstreaming in journalism education to policy and structural aspects of media technologies and their intrusive and exploitative capability to be useful for feminist strategizing. However, the structural aspects of globalised media and its regimes of truth compel us to think about institutional-political transformation – policies and laws for a public good approach to connectivity; media, data and informational capabilities that promote women’s citizenship online and offline.

## Mainstreaming gender: a challenge of inclusion and content

To conclude, challenges presented above have to be treated at several level, be they political or institutional. Gender mainstreaming, or merely introducing gender perspectives in journalism studies, will also in the future meet with conservative resistance as well as traditional gender laws and politics. Simultaneously, new contextual challenges appear, such as laws and politics on third gender, anti-discrimination laws, as well as digital discrimination.

Journalism practice has largely remained negligent to dangers of subscribing to a ‘neutral perspective’ as a parallel effort in maintaining traditions of objectivity in news-making. This reductionist approach to journalism enhanced the risk of accepting dehumanizing content and neglecting imperatives of wholesome news coverage and human rights perspectives. Gender rights are part of this perspective. These tendencies have cast a deep shadow on the academic culture and structures as well. As Gallagher asserts, amplifying women’s voices can be best served by bringing feminist scholarship in from the margins within academia – to convince others that this work is not ‘just about women’. We need to demonstrate how feminist analysis goes beyond the assumed ‘gender neutrality’ of mainstream theory to show the impact of structures and systems on social processes, and on the lives and identities of embodied women and men (see Gallagher, 2010).

Journalist ideals are inherently conflicting. On one hand, journalists will objectively “tell what happens”. On the other, the profession is supposed to act as a fourth estate, and a societal watchdog, which at times means spotlighting oppression and marginalization of groups in society. The profession, as well as the education of journalism, is best served when both these ideals are taken seriously.

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