

## Media, Gender, and Identity: Challenges and Strategies for Equitable Representation

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**ABSTRACT:** This narrative review explores the current state of gender representation across traditional and digital media platforms. The study aims to synthesize existing literature to understand how gender roles are portrayed, how structural systems influence representation, and what strategies can mitigate disparities. Employing a narrative method, this review analyzed peer-reviewed articles and grey literature sourced from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using a combination of Boolean search strategies to ensure a comprehensive dataset. Findings show that traditional media continues to depict women in stereotypical roles, while non-binary identities remain underrepresented or mischaracterized. In digital media, influencers reinforce aspirational gender norms, yet also create opportunities for visibility and activism. Intersectional research reveals that individuals with overlapping marginalized identities face compounded misrepresentation. Structural barriers—such as media ownership, editorial bias, and algorithmic filtering—sustain these portrayals. Comparative studies underscore the influence of national policy and cultural context on gender narratives. This study concludes that integrated interventions are essential to promoting authentic and diverse gender representations. Media literacy education, inclusive regulatory frameworks, and algorithmic reforms are key to disrupting entrenched inequalities. Further research should focus on longitudinal impacts and explore culturally specific media contexts to enrich global understanding.

**Keywords:** Gender Representation, Digital Media, Intersectionality, Influencer Culture, Media Literacy, Narrative Review, Stereotypes.



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## INTRODUCTION

The portrayal of gender in media has long been a subject of scrutiny, revealing the complex interplay between progress in representation and the persistence of deeply ingrained stereotypes. Across platforms such as television, print, and digital media, representations of gender continue to reflect and shape societal attitudes, often reinforcing normative structures of power and identity.

Contemporary studies emphasize that although media has gradually embraced more diverse portrayals, significant disparities remain, particularly in fields traditionally dominated by men, such as politics and science (Thesen & Yildirim, 2022; Bauer & Taylor, 2022; Jungblut & Haim, 2021). Women are still frequently confined to traditional roles, depicted as caregivers or emotional beings, while their male counterparts are presented as authoritative and rational figures (Butkowski, 2020; Elier et al., 2023).

In television, female characters are often scripted as less competent, reinforcing outdated norms of gender-based hierarchy (Mitchell & McKinnon, 2018). Advertising intensifies this issue by presenting women predominantly through sexualized imagery that prioritizes appearance over intellect or professional capability (Condeza et al., 2021). Even when progressive characters challenge conventional archetypes, such as in modern animated films, their depictions often fall short of achieving meaningful equality (Radovic & Radulović, 2016; Macdonald, 2021). Social media platforms, notably Instagram, have introduced both opportunities and obstacles in gender representation. Women engage in self-representation while simultaneously navigating societal expectations that perpetuate idealized standards of beauty and behavior (Yin & Abdullah, 2024; Kristensen, 2023). In print media, bias remains deeply embedded, often trivializing women's achievements by focusing on appearance or personal relationships rather than their intellectual or professional contributions (Sousa & Silva, 2017; Post et al., 2021; Ogwezzy-Ndisika et al., 2023).

Over the past two decades, societal transformations catalyzed by feminist movements have significantly influenced media narratives. Grassroots activism and digital advocacy campaigns have raised public awareness and pressured media producers to incorporate more equitable and diverse portrayals (Moody-Ramirez et al., 2023; Blanco-Gómez & Ortiz, 2024). Notable movements like #MeToo have spotlighted systemic gender-based violence and inequity, instigating shifts in how gender dynamics are presented in entertainment and journalism (Hindes & Fileborn, 2020). Social media has emerged as a double-edged tool: while it provides a platform for marginalized voices, it also exposes them to backlash, particularly for women who challenge societal norms (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023; Thornthwaite et al., 2018; Asenbaum, 2023).

Simultaneously, efforts to increase the visibility of women in STEM fields have encouraged more balanced narratives. Female scientists and engineers are increasingly depicted in leadership roles, albeit often overshadowed by narratives that continue to associate femininity with emotionality and subordination (Quirós-Ramírez & Martínez, 2024; Mitchell & McKinnon, 2018). Educational media, particularly those targeting younger audiences, have begun incorporating themes of gender fluidity and non-binary identities, promoting inclusivity and challenging binary gender norms (Thesen & Yildirim, 2022). Feminist discourse, thus, not only influences media content but also encourages the public to critically engage with representations that reflect complex, intersecting gender identities.

Despite the evolving media landscape, traditional gender stereotypes remain a dominant feature. One of the most pervasive issues is the sexualization and objectification of women, particularly evident in advertising and social media. These portrayals prioritize physical appearance over competence, perpetuating damaging societal norms (Yin & Abdullah, 2024; Condeza et al., 2021). Conversely, men are frequently depicted as powerful and competent, reinforcing traditional masculinity (Bauer & Taylor, 2022; Banerjee & Mitra, 2024). Media tropes often assign women to

caregiving roles while sidelining their professional or leadership capabilities (Yates et al., 2020; Elier et al., 2023).

The sports media landscape is particularly illustrative of gender bias. Male athletes receive disproportionate coverage and endorsement opportunities compared to their female counterparts, perpetuating the perception of sports as a male domain (Cardo, 2020; Kavanagh et al., 2023). Similarly, female politicians are often judged through a lens that emphasizes appearance and personal demeanor rather than policy expertise or leadership (Johnstonbaugh, 2018; Rohrbach et al., 2020). In science media, depictions of women frequently lack depth, portraying them in secondary or supporting roles (Mitchell & McKinnon, 2018; Macdonald, 2021). These persistent stereotypes continue to shape public perceptions and hinder efforts to achieve gender parity in diverse fields.

Addressing gender representation in both traditional and digital media remains fraught with challenges. Entrenched biases and cultural norms often undermine efforts to diversify portrayals, while regulatory mechanisms struggle to keep pace with rapid content dissemination. In digital spaces, women face heightened risks of harassment and self-objectification, which can suppress authentic engagement (Aran-Ramspott et al., 2024; Yin & Abdullah, 2024). Social media algorithms that favor sensational content may inadvertently amplify sexist narratives before corrective actions can be taken (Jester & Walters, 2024; Vaccaro et al., 2021). The commodification of gendered appearance further complicates the landscape, fostering environments that value aesthetics over substance (Zhang, 2024).

Amid these complexities, significant gaps persist in the academic literature, particularly concerning intersectional analyses. While gender disparities are well-documented, fewer studies explore how intersecting identities—such as race, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality—shape media representation (Banerjee & Mitra, 2024; Cukier et al., 2019). Marginalized groups, including Indigenous and disabled individuals, remain underrepresented and are often depicted in stereotypical or tokenistic ways (Biswal, 2019; Brún et al., 2013). Ethnographic approaches that center the lived experiences of these communities are still rare, limiting the depth of understanding and hindering inclusive media reform (Calvo-Calvo, 2014; Elier et al., 2023).

The current review seeks to address these gaps by systematically examining gender representation across traditional and digital media platforms, with a focus on intersectional dynamics. It aims to identify the structural mechanisms through which stereotypes are perpetuated and to evaluate the efficacy of feminist and advocacy-based interventions in reshaping media narratives. Key factors under analysis include portrayals in news, entertainment, sports, and advertising, as well as the role of social media in amplifying or challenging gendered discourse.

Geographically, the review emphasizes underexplored regions such as the Global South and Indigenous communities, where local media dynamics may differ significantly from Western paradigms. It also considers youth engagement with media, particularly how young users on platforms like TikTok and Instagram are actively reshaping gender narratives. This focus allows for a more nuanced understanding of media influence across diverse cultural and generational contexts.

By synthesizing existing literature and identifying patterns across media types, cultural contexts, and identity intersections, this review contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equality in media. It highlights both the progress made and the systemic challenges that persist, offering insights into how media can evolve to better reflect and support diverse gender identities and expressions worldwide.

This review aims to identify how gender representation is shaped across media forms, assess intersectional gaps, and evaluate interventions aimed at promoting equitable representation. It responds to growing concerns about persistent gender bias in media by synthesizing global and regional evidence, with particular attention to underrepresented voices and structures of media power.

### METHOD

This study employed a narrative review methodology to systematically collect, analyze, and synthesize scholarly literature on gender representation in media. The approach was chosen for its ability to capture a wide range of perspectives and thematic variations across disciplines, time periods, and cultural contexts. Unlike systematic reviews that rely on strict inclusion criteria and meta-analytic synthesis, the narrative review method allows for a more interpretive, descriptive, and context-rich examination of existing knowledge. It is particularly effective in exploring complex and evolving phenomena such as gender representation, where historical patterns, cultural variation, and theoretical frameworks play pivotal roles.

The literature search was conducted using three major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Each of these platforms contributed uniquely to the review. Scopus, with its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals in the social sciences and humanities, served as the primary database. Its citation tracking feature was particularly useful in identifying high-impact publications and tracing the scholarly influence of foundational texts on gender representation. Web of Science was selected for its comprehensive indexing of high-quality publications, ensuring the inclusion of rigorously vetted articles. Google Scholar, though less curated, offered access to a broader spectrum of interdisciplinary and grey literature, including conference papers, theses, and working papers. This inclusion was essential to ensure that diverse and emerging voices in gender and media studies were not overlooked.

The search process began by formulating a set of keywords that reflect the core focus of the study: gender representation, media, intersectionality, and discourse. These keywords were selected based on a preliminary reading of foundational literature and recent reviews in the field. To refine the search strategy and ensure the retrieval of relevant studies, Boolean operators were employed. Using "AND" to connect key terms, such as "gender AND media AND representation," narrowed the results to articles discussing all three concepts simultaneously. The use of "OR" allowed for the inclusion of synonymous or related terms like "feminism OR gender bias," thereby expanding the scope to include a wider array of relevant studies. Additionally, the operator "NOT" was used strategically to exclude articles that focused on media forms or topics outside the intended scope, such as "gender AND media NOT advertising," when the intent was to study broader media representations beyond commercial content.

Search strings were iteratively tested and refined to optimize both relevance and comprehensiveness. For example, the expression "(gender AND representation AND (film OR television OR social media))" was used to ensure that multiple media formats were represented in the corpus. Similarly, expressions like "(intersectionality OR identity) AND (gender AND media) AND representation" helped to capture literature examining overlapping axes of identity such as race, class, and disability within the context of gender representation in media. The inclusion of keywords like "discourse," "narratives," and "ideology" further facilitated the retrieval of literature that engaged with critical theory and interpretive analysis, consistent with the narrative review's emphasis on thematic synthesis.

To maintain methodological rigor, criteria for inclusion and exclusion were established. Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed articles, published between 2000 and 2024, and addressed gender representation in one or more forms of media, such as television, film, print, or digital platforms. Articles were also considered if they offered an intersectional analysis or contributed to feminist theory, critical discourse analysis, or media critique. Excluded from the review were articles focused solely on non-media-related topics, theoretical pieces without empirical content, or studies not available in English. This scope ensured a manageable yet comprehensive dataset, allowing for depth in interpretation without sacrificing diversity in perspective.

The initial search yielded approximately 3500 articles across all databases. Duplicates were removed, and the remaining articles were screened first by title and abstract. This preliminary screening narrowed the pool to around 200 articles, which were then subjected to a more in-depth review of their full texts. During this phase, each article was evaluated for its relevance to the research questions, methodological soundness, and contribution to the thematic categories of the review. Articles that provided substantial empirical data, theoretical insights, or critical perspectives on gender representation were retained.

The final selection consisted of approximately 120 articles, which were then coded and organized into major thematic clusters. These themes emerged inductively through repeated readings and included categories such as stereotypical portrayals in traditional media, self-representation on social media, gender roles in advertising, intersectional invisibility, and the role of feminist movements in transforming media narratives. Additional attention was given to geographic and cultural diversity, with studies from the Global South, Indigenous communities, and minority populations included to enrich the analysis with non-Western perspectives.

This narrative synthesis allowed for a flexible yet systematic exploration of the diverse ways gender is constructed, represented, and contested in media texts. The method emphasized depth over breadth, privileging interpretive richness and contextual nuance. The findings of the review are presented in the subsequent section, organized around the key themes identified during the analytical phase. These themes not only reflect the current state of scholarship but also highlight enduring gaps and emerging directions in gender-media research.

In sum, the narrative review methodology employed in this study was instrumental in capturing the multifaceted and dynamic nature of gender representation in media. Through strategic database selection, keyword formulation, and rigorous inclusion criteria, the review offers a comprehensive yet nuanced understanding of how gender continues to be shaped and reshaped in the cultural



domain of media. This approach provides a robust foundation for the ensuing analysis and offers valuable insights for scholars, media practitioners, and policymakers interested in fostering more equitable and inclusive media landscapes.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The findings from this narrative review reveal nuanced patterns in gender representation across various media types and cultural contexts. The analysis is organized into four major thematic categories: gender stereotypes in traditional media, gender portrayals in digital media and influencer culture, the representation of marginalized identities through an intersectional lens, and global comparisons in gender media representation. Each thematic section draws on empirical literature to synthesize current trends, disparities, and emerging shifts in representation.

### **Gender Stereotypes in Traditional Media**

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate the persistence of gender stereotypes in traditional media formats such as print, film, and broadcast television. In print media, women are often confined to roles emphasizing emotion, domesticity, and relationships, which diminishes their visibility as professionals or leaders (Brún et al., 2013). Such portrayals contribute to the reinforcement of cultural norms that undervalue women's competencies outside the private sphere. In film, women continue to be underrepresented in lead roles, particularly within action and science fiction genres, which are typically dominated by male characters (Zhang, 2024; Valmori et al., 2021). These representations often emphasize dependency, emotional vulnerability, and romantic entanglements, portraying female characters as secondary to their male counterparts (Neuberg et al., 2024).

In broadcast media, female politicians face critical and gendered scrutiny. Jungblut and Haim (2021) report that news coverage tends to focus disproportionately on women's appearance or private lives, rather than their professional qualifications. This results in a perception of incompetence, particularly when contrasted with male politicians, who are more likely to be framed as capable and assertive (Post et al., 2021). Jaramillo-Dent et al. (2021) warn that such representations uphold patriarchal values, normalizing societal beliefs that associate leadership and authority with masculinity. These gendered portrayals not only influence public perceptions but also perpetuate structural inequalities in political participation and representation.

Variations in gender portrayals are also evident across male, female, and non-binary characters. Male characters are typically presented as rational, assertive, and dominant, especially in action genres where they embody ideals of heroism and physical prowess (Aran-Ramspott et al., 2024). Conversely, female characters often inhabit roles that prioritize emotional labor, beauty, or supportive companionship, with limited narrative autonomy (Corsbie-Massay & Wheatly, 2022). While there have been efforts to diversify female portrayals, such as through empowered protagonists in animation or fantasy media (Zhang, 2024), true parity remains elusive.

Non-binary characters remain largely absent or are portrayed in marginal roles that emphasize their deviation from societal norms. When featured, they are frequently cast as symbolic outsiders or depicted through narratives centered on struggle and exclusion (Rohrbach, 2024; Brún et al., 2013). Such limited representations hinder public understanding and reinforce misconceptions about gender diversity. Even LGBTQ+ characters in drama and comedy genres are often reduced to caricatures, reinforcing stereotypes instead of offering multidimensional depictions (Yang et al., 2020).

### **Digital Media and Influencer Culture**

In digital media, influencers on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube play a significant role in shaping gender representation. Dominant themes include self-objectification, aspirational beauty standards, and the commodification of femininity (Noia et al., 2023; Zhang, 2024). Influencers curate content that aligns with idealized aesthetics, reinforcing hyper-feminine norms that prioritize physical appearance and lifestyle performance. This form of digital femininity often intersects with consumerism, where personal branding relies on promoting conventional gender norms to attract followers and sponsorships (Banerjee & Mitra, 2024).

Despite these constraints, some influencers have used their platforms to advocate for body positivity, mental health, and gender diversity (Yin & Abdullah, 2024; Sayed & Hotait, 2024). Non-binary and feminist influencers in particular challenge hegemonic norms by sharing personal narratives that foreground authenticity and resistance. Yet, even within these counter-narratives, the overarching culture of digital media continues to emphasize validation through appearance and visibility metrics (Yang et al., 2020).

The impact of digital media portrayals on identity formation is especially profound among youth. Exposure to idealized representations fosters self-comparison and can lead to body dissatisfaction and decreased self-esteem (Yang et al., 2020; Bailey et al., 2013). The pressure to conform to curated identities discourages individuality and reinforces rigid gender roles. However, social media also offers spaces for exploration and affirmation, where users find role models and communities that reflect diverse identities (Muir, 2022; Zhang, 2024). This duality underscores the complex influence of digital media on gender identity development.

### **Intersectionality and Marginalized Identities**

Marginalized identities such as indigenous women and non-binary individuals face unique challenges in media representation. For indigenous women, media narratives often romanticize or victimize them, failing to depict their agency and contemporary realities (Hindes & Fileborn, 2020; Zhang, 2024). These portrayals stem from colonial stereotypes and diminish the cultural richness and autonomy of indigenous communities (Mitchell & McKinnon, 2018). Non-binary characters, similarly, are frequently presented as anomalies rather than fully developed individuals. Their portrayals tend to emphasize conflict, struggle, or comic relief, rather than integrate them into normalized narrative structures (Rohrbach, 2024).

Intersectional media studies have become instrumental in illuminating these layered experiences. Researchers use intersectionality to analyze how overlapping identities—race, gender, class, sexuality—compound discrimination (Neuberg et al., 2024; Mitchell & McKinnon, 2018). For instance, indigenous women confront both gendered and racialized oppression, shaped by historical injustices and ongoing systemic exclusion (Zhang, 2024). Non-binary individuals face cultural stigma and misunderstanding that intersect with social class or ethnicity, further complicating their media visibility (Valmori et al., 2021).

Inclusive media representation can empower marginalized groups and promote broader societal change. However, studies emphasize that tokenistic or superficial portrayals risk reinforcing existing biases unless they are grounded in authenticity and produced with input from those communities (Corbie-Massay & Wheatly, 2022). Authentic representation thus demands that marginalized individuals not only appear in media but have narrative control over their stories.

### Global Comparisons and Regional Studies

Comparative studies across cultural and national contexts demonstrate that gender representation in media varies significantly based on local norms and policy environments. In Scandinavian countries, progressive policies have contributed to more egalitarian media portrayals, where women are shown in leadership roles and men in caregiving positions, disrupting traditional binaries (Lehner, 2022; Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2021). In contrast, media in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia still predominantly depict women in domestic or decorative roles, reflecting entrenched patriarchal values (Hindes & Fileborn, 2020).

In countries like Japan and South Korea, media often reinforces hyper-feminine aesthetics and submissive roles for women while marginalizing gender non-conforming identities (Zhang, 2024). These portrayals influence public perceptions and policy debates around gender equity. In Latin America, meanwhile, media often reflects both progressive and conservative discourses, with portrayals of empowered women coexisting with deeply embedded machismo stereotypes (Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2021; Valmori et al., 2021).

Lessons from countries with successful gender equity or media literacy initiatives offer pathways for improvement. Finland's media education programs empower youth with critical tools to deconstruct stereotypes, while Canada's support for female filmmakers has diversified the perspectives represented on screen (Brún et al., 2013; Mitchell & McKinnon, 2018). These case studies highlight the value of institutional support, inclusive policymaking, and public education in fostering equitable media environments.

The results of this review underscore the ongoing challenges and partial progress in media's portrayal of gender. While there is growing awareness and some improvement in diversity and inclusivity, systemic biases and stereotypes persist across both traditional and digital media platforms. A sustained focus on intersectionality, narrative authenticity, and global perspectives remains crucial for advancing equitable representation in media discourse.

The discussion of this narrative review synthesizes insights into how gender is represented across traditional and digital media, foregrounding the role of structural systems, policy frameworks, and



potential interventions in shaping media discourse. The findings suggest that media ecosystems are heavily influenced by systemic practices and technological dynamics that often perpetuate inequalities. To deepen the understanding of these dynamics, this section explores three interconnected themes: the impact of structural media systems on gender representation, the influence of media policy and regulation, and tested or proposed interventions to address persistent gender inequalities.

### Impact of Structural Media Systems on Gender Representation

Structural media systems, particularly those related to ownership, editorial gatekeeping, and algorithmic design, play a fundamental role in shaping how gender is portrayed in media. Ownership concentration in global media conglomerates leads to the prioritization of commercially viable content that often adheres to conventional gender stereotypes. Moody-Ramirez et al. (2023) argue that when media ownership is centralized, content production tends to reflect the dominant values of elite stakeholders, marginalizing underrepresented voices, particularly those of women and non-binary individuals. Neuberg et al. (2024) further suggest that market-driven imperatives discourage risk-taking in storytelling, thereby limiting the inclusion of diverse and non-normative gender narratives.

Gatekeeping practices among editors and content curators also contribute to systemic gender bias. As Mitchell and McKinnon (2018) explain, decision-makers within newsrooms often operate based on deeply ingrained cultural assumptions and editorial routines. These routines systematically disadvantage female figures, especially in political reporting, where women are more likely to be evaluated based on appearance or emotional expressiveness rather than policy expertise (Jungblut & Haim, 2021; Moody-Ramirez et al., 2023). The selection and framing of news stories thus reinforce public perceptions of leadership as inherently male, subtly undermining the credibility and competence of female politicians (Post et al., 2021).

In digital media, the structural influence of algorithmic bias adds a new layer of complexity. Algorithms are designed to promote content that maximizes user engagement, which often favors sensational or visually appealing material. This tendency results in the amplification of gendered content that adheres to popular norms, while nuanced or critical discussions on gender representation receive minimal visibility (Gitler & Lachover, 2021). Mitchell and McKinnon (2018) highlight that the lack of algorithmic transparency in platform design further entrenches these inequalities, as users remain unaware of the biases embedded in the recommendation systems that shape their media consumption.

Thus, the interaction between ownership dynamics, editorial gatekeeping, and algorithmic systems generates a media environment that privileges dominant gender norms while systematically excluding counter-narratives. These findings emphasize the need to interrogate the structural dimensions of media production and dissemination to understand how gender inequality is continuously reproduced in contemporary media landscapes.

**Relationship Between Media Policy/Regulation and Gender Portrayals**

The presence or absence of media regulation significantly influences how gender is portrayed across content platforms. Effective media policies have the potential to mitigate harmful stereotypes and promote equitable representation. In countries where regulatory frameworks incorporate gender equity objectives, positive shifts in media content have been documented. For instance, Noia et al. (2023) report that the implementation of gender-sensitive programming mandates in some European nations has contributed to increased visibility of women in leadership roles within television and news media.

Regulations that mandate gender quotas or diversity reporting can directly influence hiring practices, content themes, and production teams, thereby altering the media output. Neuberg et al. (2024) suggest that such policies can act as catalysts for change by holding media organizations accountable for inclusive representation. Similarly, Zhang (2024) underscores that these regulatory tools help reduce the incidence of stereotypical portrayals and promote nuanced narratives that reflect the diversity of contemporary societies.

However, the lack of regulatory oversight in many countries remains a critical barrier to progress. In contexts where policies are either absent or poorly enforced, media content often reproduces regressive gender norms that cater to dominant market sensibilities rather than public interest (Mitchell & McKinnon, 2018). The unregulated nature of digital platforms compounds this issue, as social media often escapes the purview of traditional media governance. Gitler and Lachover (2021) emphasize that the global reach of digital platforms poses new challenges for enforcement, making it difficult to apply national standards to transnational media content.

Despite these challenges, regulatory reform remains a viable avenue for addressing systemic gender bias. Moody-Ramirez et al. (2023) advocate for integrated media policies that go beyond content quotas to address broader structural inequalities, including the composition of media boards and leadership positions. These reforms can foster a media environment that is both inclusive and reflective of diverse gender identities, thereby contributing to broader goals of social equity.

**Proposed or Tested Interventions to Address Gender Inequality in Media**

Multiple interventions have been introduced or proposed to challenge gender inequality in media representation, ranging from grassroots advocacy to institutional reforms and technological innovation. Advocacy initiatives remain crucial in driving public awareness and institutional accountability. Campaigns highlighting biased coverage, such as those launched by media watchdog organizations, have pressured outlets to reassess their editorial practices and diversify their content portfolios (Moody-Ramirez et al., 2023; Neuberg et al., 2024). These movements often catalyze public discourse and contribute to the normalization of gender-sensitive reporting.

Media literacy programs represent a complementary strategy with a long-term impact. Lewington et al. (2018) and Mitchell and McKinnon (2018) demonstrate that when integrated into school curricula, such programs enhance young people's ability to decode and critique media messages. By fostering critical thinking skills, media literacy initiatives empower audiences to recognize and resist harmful stereotypes, thus reducing the passive internalization of gendered norms. These

programs also provide a foundation for future content creators to approach media production with awareness of representation politics.

Technological interventions, particularly in the realm of algorithm design, offer a novel avenue for enhancing gender equity in digital media. Zhang (2024) notes that efforts to develop algorithms that prioritize diversity and inclusivity can disrupt existing patterns of bias and broaden the visibility of marginalized narratives. Such innovations depend on transparent design processes and ongoing audits to assess algorithmic outcomes. Post et al. (2021) suggest that algorithmic reform must be accompanied by participatory governance, where users and civil society stakeholders are involved in shaping digital policy frameworks.

Nonetheless, each of these interventions faces significant barriers. Advocacy efforts may encounter resistance from entrenched media interests, while media literacy programs require sustained investment and political will. Technological solutions are limited by proprietary systems and the opacity of platform governance. Gitler and Lachover (2021) argue that without cross-sector collaboration, the scalability and effectiveness of these interventions remain constrained.

Given these limitations, future efforts should aim for integrative solutions that bridge policy, education, and technology. Collaborative platforms that bring together policymakers, technologists, educators, and activists are essential to creating sustainable change. Moreover, longitudinal research is necessary to assess the long-term effectiveness of these interventions across different socio-cultural contexts. By combining empirical monitoring with theoretical development, researchers can continue to refine intervention strategies that promote gender equity in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

## CONCLUSION

This narrative review has revealed that gender representation in both traditional and digital media remains deeply influenced by persistent stereotypes, structural inequalities, and evolving cultural contexts. Traditional media frequently portrays women in emotionally dependent or subordinate roles, while non-binary identities remain marginalized or stereotyped. Digital media, particularly influencer culture, reinforces aspirational femininity and body ideals, even as it offers platforms for empowerment and visibility. Intersectional analyses show that individuals with overlapping marginalized identities—such as Indigenous women or non-binary persons—experience compounded misrepresentation.

The structural dynamics of media systems, including editorial gatekeeping, commercial imperatives, and algorithmic bias, contribute to the maintenance of gender norms. Despite incremental progress in diverse portrayals, a fundamental shift is necessary to create equitable representation. The findings highlight the importance of integrated interventions, including media literacy education, inclusive media policy, and technological reforms, to dismantle systemic biases.

Urgent action is required to develop and enforce regulations that promote gender-sensitive content and ensure diverse participation in media production. Collaborative efforts among educators, policymakers, media practitioners, and platform designers are essential to generate sustainable

change. Future research should expand on underrepresented perspectives and explore the long-term impact of interventions across cultural contexts.

Addressing gender misrepresentation requires not only surface-level diversity but also narrative control, authenticity, and sustained systemic reform. As media continues to shape societal values, it holds the potential to either perpetuate inequality or become a transformative force for gender equity.

Future studies should include media content in local languages and investigate how gender narratives evolve in algorithm-driven short-form content such as TikTok and Reels. These emerging formats represent a dynamic frontier where representation patterns can both challenge and reinforce dominant gender ideologies.

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