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Algorithms' Role in Women Journalists' Presence on Digital Platforms: An Analysis of Stake-holders' (Male & Female Journalists, AI Experts) Opinion

Abstract

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Keywords: Algorithms, Women Journalists, Digital Platforms, Gender Bias, Stakeholder Opinions

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Title

Algorithms' Role in Women Journalists' Presence on Digital Platforms: An Analysis of Stakeholders' (Male & Female Journalists, AI Experts) Opinion

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Contents

Abstract

It is possible that social media could worsen gender disparities in journalism due to the automated processes. This study looks into how digital media algorithms impact the visibility and interactions of women journalists. The study draws on qualitative data from Journalists and AI (Artificial Intelligence) specialists (both male and female). The study examines the impact of algorithmic biases on the professional and social visibility of women in digital space. Out of the thirty (30) individuals, 15 were journalists and 15 were AI specialists. Among the female journalists, the majority felt disenfranchised by opaque recommendation systems. AI specialists mentioned biased data in systems while male journalists recognized the disparity as a byproduct rather than a feature of the system. Digital spaces need systems designed in diversity-equitable manner. The analysis demands a sense of collaboration from all disciplines to address the impact of algorithms.

Keywords:

Algorithms, Women Journalists, Digital Platforms, Gender Bias, Stakeholder Opinions

Introduction:

Recent studies exploring the intersection of gender, algorithms, and digital journalism have led to the emerging field of automated bias in digital journalism. Algorithms in social media journalism have been critiqued for their historical focus bias, which has led to the silencing of women's voices. Women and women-focused stories, and women journalists' visibility bias in favor of men, and male, sexist, and sensational bias, have been demonstrated in studies of bias in algorithmic content recommendation systems. This body of research

demonstrates the importance of the stakeholder roles of journalists through lived-experience qualitative analysis, and the technical audit of AI systems. Social media algorithms research data demonstrate that social media algorithms assault and silence dissenting voices through trolling, deepfakes, and violence against women (Gutiérrez-Caneda et al., 2024).

Emerging research, after building an understanding, has started developing interdisciplinary models that include AI specialists, particularly in the area of developing mitigation strategies. Research has stepped into the socio-technical sphere of bias, specifically the ways in which training data processes embed patriarchal data structures into the algorithmic frameworks of platforms. These studies have called for and documented the need for inclusive design reform, documented from the diverse stakeholder spectrum, from first-person accounts of journalists to second-person reviews by technical engineers. However, comparatively little research has been done on the views of male and female journalists, AI specialists, and the cross-sections of viewpoints at the intersectionality of gender-based violence and equity advocacy. The following sections articulate the gaps and provide the background, problem statement, and goals, with the hope of providing practical design solutions to issues of digitally equitable spaces (Iranzo-Cabrera et al., 2025).

Background of the Study

Social networking sites employ proprietary algorithms concerning news usage and audience interaction to decide news visibility and engagement. X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube decide user feeds, recommend posts, and promote or demote journalists' stories. Despite journalists having the ability to promote their work and interact with audiences, social media platforms use gatekeeping mechanisms. Because of systemic media gender bias, women journalists are further disadvantaged by the invisibility of their work due to gatekeeping algorithms (Sampaio-Dias et al., 2024).

The prioritization of male users over women users is a well-documented phenomenon on social media. Fewer women commentators and less social justice and gender-based commentary are present. While women commentators may suffer the greatest from social media engagement-induced harassment, the degree of harassment may be a function of the individual rather than the platform. Social media may incentivize and normalize threats, doxing, and other hybrid forms of online gendered violence (Chen et al., 2024).

These situations put journalists' fundamental safety and professional efficacy at risk and also create even greater constraints on the scope of discourse and on the safety of women's voices in the construction of news and the formation of opinion.

Where tech construction based on historical patterns and the lived experiences of journalists' bias intersect, we see the complexity of the entanglements between technology and inequity within the gender system. To grasp the systems, their purposes, and their effects, the viewpoints of stakeholders, particularly male and female journalists, and AI specialists at the technological layer who handle these systems, are of great importance (Partha et al., 2024).

Problem Statement

Online platforms are said to possess biases that reduce visibility and audience reach and increase abuse and violence towards, in particular, women journalists. While evidence of this phenomenon exists, research still appears to treat these problems independently, dissecting the absence of gender equality within journalism, the problem of online abuse, and lastly the algorithm and the components of algorithmic abuse. There are also many studies that lack the integration and juxtaposition of the perspectives of women journalists (the most disadvantaged), male journalists (the most privileged), and AI specialists (the most technical). Fragmented analyses fail to formulate the problems sufficiently to improve comprehension of the ways in which algorithms operate to deepen inequities in digital journalism. These analyses also fail to articulate sufficiently informed and robust ways to improve equity and safety on such platforms.

Significance of the Study

This research, in multidisciplinary ways, addresses the challenges lying at the crossroads of technology, gender, and journalism. The discrimination that women journalists encounter in technology-

centered media ecosystems, the bias of algorithmically dictated media ecosystems, abuse within journalism, and the creation of media content are issues of social relevance (Chen, 2025).

While the misuse of AI for deceptive impersonation, especially for the purposes of misogyny, has raised public concerns, developing the necessary reforms for platforms, AI ethics, and policies involves understanding stakeholders' perspectives. This study combines concepts and frameworks at the technical, experiential, and professional levels by integrating male journalists and their relatively neutral perspectives; female journalists, who offer first-hand experiential accounts of marginalization, threats, and safety issues; and AI and data specialists who work on issues of data bias and methods to address it.

This study collaborates to identify concerns and recommendations for the equitable and responsible design of algorithms and systems to counteract normative patriarchal defaults, i.e., prevailing misogyny (Fraile-Rojas et al., 2025).

By tackling cross-sectional issues at the focal points of control, ownership, and algorithms governing public debates and socio-economic factors driving inequality, this research aims to foster safer and more inclusive online environments, empower women journalists, and advance media gender justice.

Research Objectives

1. To study the degree to which digital platforms' algorithms influence the visibility and audience reach of women journalists compared to their male counterparts.
2. To examine the perceptions of female journalists regarding the presence of algorithmic bias and the effects of online gendered harassment exacerbated by online platform features.
3. To evaluate the opinions of male journalists about the roles of algorithms in gendered inequalities in digital journalism, and whether they regard the impacts as structural or as mere incidentals.
4. To analyze the views of practitioners in artificial intelligence regarding bias within algorithmic frameworks, data training, and recommendation systems related to gender inequities, and the frameworks themselves.

Literature Review

Studies on the impact of algorithms on digital journalism automation have shown that there is an impact of automation on journalism, gender, and media power relations. Many researchers have shown how the recommendation algorithms of major platforms, prioritizing inequitable engagement over equity, ignore the voices of marginalized people, including women journalists. These studies show a shift from human editorial gatekeeping to invisible algorithmic curation, which perpetuates social bias and privileges emotionally charged curation, while sidelining more complex or justice-centered content. Research gaps describe the visibility, reach, and safety deficits of women that result from the synergy of online networks, topic steering, and the proliferation of online threats (Thomas & Thomson, 2025).

Incorporating multiple perspectives, further research attempts to account for real-world impacts. Female journalists describe, through lived experience, reduced reach and increased exposure to gendered abuse; male journalists often understand the gap as neutral and meritocratic; and AI experts describe the technical bias of data and design. All these perspectives highlight the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to examining algorithmic gaps in the digital public sphere, especially as they pertain to the visibility and voice of women in the field of journalism. The next sections detail these strands, beginning with the functions of algorithms, the gendered aspects of the field, and the intersecting perspectives (Baloch et al., 2025).

Algorithms and Digital Platforms

Today's digital marketplace is built around algorithms as the most critical component of decision-making architecture. Automated in nature, algorithms process enormous amounts of user data, such as browsing histories and user interactions, as well as demographic data and social network information. They do this in order to personalize content feeds, rank search results, and recommend content to users. Digital platforms, including X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, use various machine learning applications, including

collaborative filtering and deep neural networks, to predict users' preferences and optimize recommendations based on these predictions and metrics such as time on platform, click-through rates, and overall session duration (Albizu-Rivas et al., 2024).

The most significant user-centered economic consideration motivating such designs remains user engagement metrics, which in turn drive advertising revenue. Thus, algorithms tend to be biased toward amplifying content that stimulates emotional reactions whether anger, surprise, fear, or excitement rather than neutral or balanced reporting. This condition in journalism, for instance, generates phenomena whereby breaking news and opinionated posts rise to the top while investigative and analytical posts sink. The largely opaque and proprietary nature of these algorithms has encouraged the use of the term "black box" to describe them, as there is little room for external questioning or evaluation of ranking, estimation, or bias-mitigation processes, whether as a function or as an intended outcome of such algorithms (Møller et al., 2025).

Additionally, algorithms inherit and reproduce biases from prior user behavior as recorded in the historical engagement data on which they are trained. This results in the reinforcement of biases in popularity and cultural preferences embedded within the data being used (Carstensen & Ganz, 2025a).

In terms of how news spreads, news providers receive different amounts of visibility. News accounts with large followings or those located in influential networks receive content bias through snowball amplification effects. On the other hand, creators who are new and disconnected have little to no chance of their content being seen. Given this reality, the digital gatekeeping phenomenon poses an additional challenge to journalism. With no editorial oversight, the replacement of human judgment with algorithms has created a void in traditional editorial gatekeeping. The editorial gatekeeping that once regulated public discourse has, in the absence of discernible human editors, been supplanted by algorithms. These algorithms decide who gets visibility and thus control public discourse (Dijkstra et al., 2024).

Gender and Journalism

For as long as journalism has been documented, there have been gender inequalities. This includes inequalities in newsroom demographics, assignment of stories, selection of sources, and the portrayal of women. Even with the number of women journalism graduates increasing and women beginning to acquire senior positions, with the digital shift in the industry, additional challenges and barriers have emerged. In spite of the move toward equality, women journalists, based on their own experiences, continue to point out that online algorithms promote the content of their male colleagues far more than that of their female peers. This leads to a substantial imbalance in the reach, shares, and professional standing of their work (Kalfeli & Angeli, 2025a).

Part of the visibility gap can be traced to historical advantages within networks. Work that has been algorithmically biased in its promotion circulates within networks that have historically been dominated by men. The amplification of violence against women by the algorithms of social media platforms also adds to the inequities at play. Online violence against women has been proven to be an embedded social media concern, and the extent of this violence appears to be directly proportional to the quantity of content produced by male journalists (Pereira & Machado, 2024).

While female journalists encounter many difficulties in the digital journalism space, the particular combination of online violence and algorithmic amplification is exceedingly grave. Women journalists are subject to heightened levels of abuse, including violence, doxxing, and harassment at a personal level. In addition, they are more likely to report on feminist, political, minority, and sexual violence issues (Sarrionandia et al., 2025). Aggressive misogynistic attacks on women usually have a more extensive reach than the average attack. The publication of the attack often goes more viral than the publication of the issue itself. These attacks trigger further abuse, so the more user engagement an attack causes, the more incentive there is to repeat it. Because of this, many female reporters have changed their online reporting techniques. Most female reporters resort to anonymous reporting, reduce their professional identity, and post modestly on subjects that require professional

protection (Barrolleta & Sandoval-Martín, 2024). Because of this, it can be said that the majority of women do not have the same online access as men. This can also be said for the many women whose voices are either inadequately represented or not represented at all in the literature and coverage of important and relevant issues. As a result, women also do not have the same access as men to influence the literature and coverage of important and relevant issues (Noain Sánchez, 2022).

Stakeholders' Perspectives

Examining stakeholders' perspectives enables us to grasp the complexities resulting from the multifaceted impact of algorithms on the digital visibility of women journalists. Structural disadvantages characterize the experiences of women journalists. Achieving organic reach for posts, irrespective of quality, is a challenge for many. Numerous journalists claim that potential systemic biases within algorithms lead to more favorable visibility for stories written by men on geopolitical and financial issues, and less favorable visibility for stories written by women on human and reproductive rights and domestic violence. Detractors suggest the use of pseudonymous accounts and opaque prioritization algorithms as possible culprits (Matsiola & Pilitsidou, 2025).

The dangers associated with using these platforms also include an increased likelihood of harassment, which is frustratingly predictable given that harassment is amplified when people reply to and/or quote-tweet much more frequently than users offer support. This emotional detachment from harassment discourages people from participating fully on the platform, if at all. Many people are frustrated by the lack of adequate content moderation and the grossly inadequate responses of platform designers, who attempt to address the issue by suggesting that the lack of moderation reflects a lack of understanding of the highly gendered nature of the violence (Parvez, 2025). Male journalists, on the other hand, tend to notice and acknowledge gaps in visibility, but explain them in terms of large, market-driven forces. They are particularly fond of the concept of audience capital, which refers to the idea that any user has the potential to reach a significant audience, and which is promoted as the primary driver of engagement, while overlooking the influence of other, more structural and gendered effects. Some of these observations are articulated in a way that implies a belief in the absence of systemic bias, suggesting that journalists are individually responsible for content, engagement, posting frequency, self-selected strategies, and topic choice (D'haeseleer et al., 2025).

This is not to say that these issues are not present, but it creates the impression that what should be considered gendered issues are either overstated or not as significant as other issues perceived as more platform-related.

AI and machine-learning practitioners provide a third perspective, viewing bias as stemming from historically overarching patterns in data that center masculine voices and perspectives. An example of this is how recommendation systems identify patterns of over- and under-representation and, as a result of prior user engagement, bias the system to disregard more diverse or non-conforming narratives, thereby perpetuating the under-representation of alternative or secondary narratives (Karnouskos, 2020). Experts have pointed to under-identified proxy variables, the homogeneity of development teams, a lack of due diligence in detecting gender disparities, the absence of accountability mechanisms for bias, and silos in inter-design system policies. They have also highlighted the need for routine auditing of inter-design systems, inclusive data tagging, counterfactual fairness theories, and empirically based inter-design system theories grounded in relational hierarchies of power (Cheriti, 2025). All of these perspectives provide a micro- to macro-level view of experiences of marginalization, defensive minimization of the phenomenon, and technocratic identification of systemic issues, underscoring the importance of triangulating experiences, perspectives, and expertise. This triangulation is essential to grasping and understanding algorithmic gender bias in digital journalism (Posetti et al., 2020).

Research Gap

The operation of social media algorithms, diversity, equity, and inclusion in journalism and journalism studies, and online violence targeting women journalists have been the subjects of several studies. There remain few empirical studies, however, that attempt to simultaneously analyze the perspectives of three key actors female journalists (the most

directly marginalized), male journalists (who hold a counterpoint), and AI specialists (who have a relevant constructive marginalization perspective) on social media algorithms and their impact on the visibility, reach, and safety of women journalists. Also lacking are studies that combine qualitative trauma with the technical insider perspective. As a result, research is lacking that provides a fully integrated and balanced framework to construct a design for algorithmic journalism that addresses the problem from an equity perspective.

Theoretical Framework

Along with critical studies of algorithms, this research incorporates a specific fusion of algorithmic gatekeeping theory and feminist technology studies. Algorithmic gatekeeping theory applies the idea of traditional gatekeeping, wherein human editors make decisions about which news stories are published, to a digital setting in which news and information are automatically ranked and filtered by opaque algorithms based on user engagement without any editorial input. Such systems are trained on historical data that consistently reproduce biases by privileging established, often male-dominated networks over new or marginalized ones (Forja-Pena et al., 2024).

Feminist technology studies critique how technology design, data interpretation, and optimization strategies reflect patriarchal bias. Such studies also critique how supposedly objective and neutral technologies create disadvantageous inequities for women. This approach further critiques how social oppression is coded into algorithms, as they give preference to abusive and violent content directed toward women. Critical studies of algorithms focus on the lack of transparency within systems, the profit-driven model of engagement, socio-technical biases that are ignored, the use of proxies, the homogenized lack of diversity in design and development, and the poor design of accountability systems. All of these articulate the negative impact of digital algorithms on women journalists' visibility, engagement, and safety (Liu et al., 2025).

Relevancy of Theory with Present Research

The theoretical perspectives used in the thesis best fit the current research, as they tackle the main issues head-on. Algorithmic gatekeeping theory posits that the loss of audience and visibility control due to the shift to automated systems translates into inequities in visibility and reach between male and female journalists. This explanation resonates well with participants' descriptions of amplification inequities and networked effects (Kalfeli & Angeli, 2025b).

The intersection of feminist technology studies and critical algorithm studies allows for a detailed understanding of how online data bias is gendered, focusing particularly on the escalation of online abuse, the dismissal of topics, and the chilling effects on women's participation, which female journalists experience and male journalists interpret differently (Aissani et al., 2023). This intersection assists in disassembling the structural patriarchal embeddedness that lies beneath the more neutral or incidental framings provided by male journalists. The triangulation of experiential narratives with technical analyses positions this framework in a specific manner within interdisciplinary scholarship on disparity and inclusive design, showcasing its importance for incorporating lived experience, disparate perceptions, and technical knowledge in the advocacy of gender equity in digital journalism (Kuai, 2025).

Research Questions

1. Are women journalists discriminated against by algorithms on digital platforms through reduced web presence and reach compared to their male counterparts?
2. Do female journalists feel that there is inequality in algorithms and that online gender-based violence is worsening due to the way platforms function?
3. What do male journalists think about the effects of algorithms on gender imbalance in digital journalism? Are the influences seen as structural and systemic, or as incidental and reactive?
4. Do Artificial Intelligence specialists perceive bias in training data and recommendation systems as an obstacle to attaining fair outcomes for women?

Research Methodology:

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to develop a qualitative research design to facilitate the establishment of a stakeholder framework concerning the impact of algorithms on the digital visibility of women journalists. This approach is designed to focus on the subjective input of stakeholders regarding the impact of their work. From an interpretive viewpoint, the complexity of the design is attributed to the focus of the study, which is the grassroots level of algorithmic impact.

The study involves women journalists, who typically face greater marginalization; male journalists, who provide contrasting or comparative views; and AI and algorithm experts, who incorporate a techno-economic aspect. Such a design offers a cross-sectional analysis to capture the convergence and divergence of various elements and signal potentially transformative gaps. The study is primarily exploratory because it focuses on the identification of themes, patterns, and structures rather than on the testing of a hypothesis.

Population of the Study

This study will take as its sample established professionals possessing a background in digital journalism and algorithmic systems. This includes both male and female journalists with a minimum of three years of experience in digital journalism who produce news content and disseminate it on social media platforms such as X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. It also includes practitioners in the field of AI and algorithms, particularly those trained in machine learning, as well as those focusing on algorithmic recommendation systems, algorithmic fairness, AI ethics, and platform governance. Participants are drawn from various parts of the world and media sectors (mainstream, independent, and freelance) and cover various professional roles, adding to the extensive diversity of the study at the intersection of algorithms, digital journalism, and gender equity.

Sampling Technique

The main method of participant selection was purposive sampling, which made it possible to identify and recruit the most suitable candidates with the most relevant, valuable, and insightful information directly related to the study questions. Given that this is a non-probability sampling method, it focused on individuals with extensive and practical knowledge related to the phenomenon under study. Participants were identified and approached via professional networks, journalism organizations, academic networks in media and technology, LinkedIn, industry discussion platforms, and work collaboration tools. Journalists were included in the study if, and only if, they had a minimum of three years of work experience as active digital journalists who create content and identify themselves as journalists (Palla & Kostarella, 2025). The selection of AI and algorithm experts was based on their relevant work within the sphere of algorithmic fairness, recommender systems, social media algorithms, AI ethics, and related fields, as reflected in their publications, positionality, work roles, or projects. In the sampling process, considerable efforts were made to achieve balance and variability in gender, age, geography, media institutions, and subfields of AI and algorithms and their intersections, in order to obtain rich and diverse perspectives.

Sample Size

The study comprised 30 participants in total, of whom 15 were journalists. They were almost equally distributed across gender categories, with 8 females and 7 males. This distribution was achieved within practical limitations to facilitate comparative analysis. The other 15 participants were specialists in AI and algorithms, focusing on algorithmic systems, machine learning, recommender systems, and platform governance, among other domains (Kazmi & Ali, 2025). This study aims to characterize a phenomenon, and in such studies, 30 participants are usually sufficient to achieve what is termed thematic saturation, which is the point at which recruiting additional participants ceases to yield new or significant insights. This number also ensured a thorough analysis at the level of each stakeholder group and at the level of the entire qualitative dataset.

Data Collection Method

The data gathered included semi-structured interviews with three sets of participants: female journalists, male journalists, and AI and algorithm specialists. Semi-structured interviews provide

depth on new topics while still allowing consistency, as some set questions were both open- and closed-ended across different subjects. For each participant group, separate but parallel interview guides were created to serve the aims of the study. Interview guides for female journalists were aimed at perceptions of algorithmic bias, experiences related to online visibility and audience reach, cases of gendered online abuse and harassment exacerbated by platforms, and the ramifications of engagement optimization. Interview guides for male journalists were oriented toward perceptions of the extent to which algorithms create and sustain gendered inequities in digital journalism and whether they viewed them as systemic or merely incidental. Interview guides for experts in AI and algorithms focused on the evaluation of bias across different phases of the design and construction of algorithmic systems, including data collection and training, recommendation logic, and other facets pertaining to digital economy inequity from a gender perspective (Jamil, 2021).

The duration of each interview ranged from 30 minutes to 45 minutes and was conducted in English. To accommodate a wide range of geographical locations and time zones of interviewees, the interviews were carried out using encrypted and secure video-conferencing methods, including Zoom. Interviews were conducted with participants' understanding and voluntary consent to audio recording after informed consent was obtained. Every interview was encrypted along with additional research materials. To ensure participant responses were kept confidential, the final interview transcripts were encrypted and anonymized before analysis. The final interview transcripts were analyzed collectively in order to facilitate an integrated analysis of different individual viewpoints. By focusing on both the journalistic dimension of experience and the technical control of the algorithmic hierarchy, this approach provided the study with a comprehensive understanding of both.

For data analysis, thematic analysis was used, guided by Braun and Clarke's six-phase reflexive approach. Familiarization with the data and initial coding required multiple readings of the transcripts. Initial codes were documented, organized, and grouped across the entire dataset into thematic categories. Themes were summarized, and definitions were provided to describe the central essence of each theme. The final report was complemented with participant quotations. The data were analyzed using qualitative coding procedures for open coding and theme construction aligned with the study's objectives. An inductive approach was conducted across the available data, most notably the perspectives of female journalists, male journalists, and AI and algorithm experts, to identify thematic convergence and divergence.

In addition to member checking, peer debriefing, and coding process audits, multiple strategies were used to enhance the credibility of the findings. In member checking, participants reviewed and confirmed summaries of their contributions.

Data Analysis Technique

I applied Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis as it pertains to the reflexive approach across six phases. Upon analysis of the initial transcripts, the first of the six phases involved creating initial codes that captured the essence of the transcripts and assisted in structuring the data. After each code was organized and labeled, I assigned themes to each code that I reviewed in order to help maintain the organization and coherence of each packet of codes. After all the themes were assigned and the names of all the themes were adjusted in order to help describe the attributes and the main ideas of each code packet, I was ready to write the final report and add quotes from the participants to help illustrate my points. I employed an inductive thematic analysis approach to examine interview data, aligning with the qualitative orientation of prior research in this area (Khamis & El-Ibiary, 2022). The thematic coding allowed me to refine the codes and create themes that were most closely aligned with my research questions. The data analysis was mainly inductive because the data were analyzed in order to create themes without much outside structure. I used the perspectives and backgrounds of the three groups (female and male journalists, and experts on AI and algorithms) to bring attention to both the convergence and divergence of views. The findings were most trustworthy because of member checking, peer debriefing, and coding audits. Member checking is when participants have a

chance to review and give feedback on the main points that summarize their contributions.

Operationalization of Theories

During data collection and analysis, the study's triad theories algorithmic gatekeeping, feminist technology studies, and critical studies of algorithms were integrated and applied. Through this process, the researcher attempted to distill and capture participants' perspectives on the theories. With regard to algorithmic gatekeeping, the researcher examined participants' perceptions of the function of unexposed gatekeeping algorithms, such as the 'engagement' metric and 'network' and 'amplification' algorithms acting as gatekeeping editors. The researcher considered feminist technology studies by exploring the lived experiences of structural, patriarchal bias in algorithms, such as biases associated with training data, the underscoring of topics related to women, and the patriarchal violence of algorithmic harassment, including feedback loops. Critical studies of algorithms were applied by collecting descriptions or attributions of the 'black box' (algorithmic opacity) and proxy variables (e.g., followers, posting style) that trigger gender biases, as well as the inadequate diversity of algorithmic design teams and bias testing (Carstensen & Ganz, 2025b).

Theoretical dimensions were examined using specific interview questions focused on bias, disparity, harassment, and related issues, which were categorized and systematically thematized to capture the range of meanings participants assign to these issues and encounter in practice. This method provided a basis for triangulation across the lived experiences of journalists, the perceptions of male counterparts, and the expert engagement of AI and algorithm specialists.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical principles at all stages by studying and applying the relevant guidelines and best practices for dealing with sensitive qualitative data from vulnerable participants. Before the commencement of data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, methods of data collection, possible risks (including triggering memories of harassment), and possible benefits, and were told that participation was completely voluntary. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any point without consequences. In terms of confidentiality and anonymity, the researchers took the following measures. All data were secured, interviews were recorded and transcribed using encrypted services, all data were scrubbed of identifiers, and pseudonyms were used in all reports. Given the sensitive nature of the study, particularly the examination of harassment and online gendered violence, participants were provided with referral resources to access support, were allowed to skip any questions, and were allowed to stop the interview. Regarding data protection, all data were secured in a data storage system accessible only to the research team, and data minimization practices were followed.

Data Presentation and Analysis:

Data Presentation

The data have been divided by the different emerging themes, meaning that the data are organized according to the themes that emerged from the analysis. To illustrate the key findings, some participants' direct, anonymized quotes will be used, including original evidence. The presentation illustrates the "Marginalization" of each stakeholder, i.e., female journalists, male journalists' neutral framings, and AI experts' technical framings. The data are organised thematically, with themes developed through inductive open coding. Participants' perspectives are presented through descriptive thematic narratives supported by selected verbatim excerpts to illustrate key patterns across and within the three groups. It shows commonalities and differences between the various groups.

Data Analysis

The analysis employs inductive theme construction and deductive theme alignment with the research objectives and the associated theory. After several cycles of coding, themes were distilled and named to represent core concepts such as the mechanisms of algorithmic bias, gaps in visibility and harassment amplification, perceptual divides, and design suggestions. Comparisons across groups revealed both convergence (for instance, the universal recognition of the prioritization of engagement in

content algorithms) and divergence (such as female journalists prioritizing structural harm versus male journalists considering it an incidental factor). The trustworthiness of the analysis was bolstered through triangulation of data sources (interviews), negative case analysis (consideration of outlier perspectives), and reflexive notes from the researcher. The empirical findings and broader analyses of gender equity issues in digital journalism have been translated into actionable policy recommendations on how algorithmic systems can be made more equitable.

Conclusion:

Discussion

The 30 stakeholder semi-structured interviews from the qualitative findings have provided evidential depth. From the selection of 8 female journalists and 7 male journalists, as well as 15 AI specialists, the significant impacts of the algorithms of major digital platforms on the presence, visibility, impact, and safety of women journalists have been recorded. These platforms include X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, and they all operate on complex recommendation algorithms that personalize user experience, rank information, and determine dissemination to the wider public. These algorithms are designed with the primary goal of maximizing user engagement, and they rely on metrics such as time on the platform, click-through rates, number of likes and shares, and length of the session. Thus, these systems, intentionally or, as some would say, structurally, create and reinforce gendered inequalities in digital journalism.

Women reporters repeatedly described a consistent experience of disparate treatment by digital algorithms. Quality, factually accurate, timely, and investigative pieces that focused on gender-based violence and women's rights, as well as reproductive health, domestic violence, social justice, and other complex intersectional issues, were frequently ignored and received significantly lower impressions, organic reach, shares, and engagement compared to similar work produced by men. Numerous participants illustrated this with case studies: a woman journalist's thorough investigative report on a particular sector's sexual harassment would suffer from poor algorithmic promotion, while a man journalist's opinionated, controversial, and conflictual commentary on geopolitics or global economics could quickly go viral. This gap in visibility was often attributed to unclear and opaque patterns of prioritization that tend to favor visibility through connections in highly stratified, professionally male-dominated networks and reverberating silos. It is particularly snowball amplification that disadvantages newcomers, freelancers, and independent journalists, or those outside prevalent mainstream clusters. This makes audience and social capital accumulation particularly challenging for women.

The extensive reach of algorithmic amplification of gender-based online harassment is equally concerning. Misogynistic attacks and insults, threats of rape, doxing, and coordinated harassment, including trolling campaigns, image-based sexual violence, and deepfakes, have been commonplace in reply threads, quote tweets, and even in recommendation feeds. Because engagement optimization views high-volume, emotionally charged (positive or negative) interactions as indicators of relevance, harassment and abusive trolling are often given inflated prominence and traction. This leads to looser and less accountable environments where abuse is normalized, increasingly makes harassment "engaging," and places women journalists at the center of heightened, targeted abuse, creating overwhelming personal, emotional, and professional burdens. Numerous women participants noted that they adopted protective behaviors such as softening their language, avoiding certain subjects, using pseudonyms, reducing their posting volume, and even withdrawing from the platform entirely. While many of these self-censorship behaviors are rational from an individual self-preservation standpoint, they also perpetuate the shrinking of a person's digital space, or "presence," and "contribution space," which in turn diminishes the diversity of women's voices in public discourse.

Male journalists have been more detailed compared to their female counterparts in discussing visibility issues affecting women journalists and have provided more strategic explanations for these visibility issues. Audience size, pre-existing following, posting frequency, topic choice, and the personal actions of individuals (optimization) are some of the explanations provided in the absence of

recognition of systemic gender bias. The answer to the posed question of why women are more frequent targets than men on social media platforms is not found in a more pointed problem caused by the structures that govern social media platforms (the algorithms), but rather in the "toxic" environment and more generalized online problems. This difference in perceptions of online violence has created a gap in the degree of advocacy and empathy that male journalists extend toward their female counterparts. The impact of this gap is reflected in the absence of advocacy for more systemic change.

Artificial intelligence (AI) experts have articulated the reasoning behind gender bias as a systemic design issue rather than a random problem. Media and the internet have a long history of being dominated by men and male perspectives, and training datasets reflect this imbalance. Because of this, media models learn to associate high engagement and click rates with male-dominated content and penalize alternative content and structures. Proxy variables such as verification, followers, network centrality, timing, engagement windows, and posting style tend to reinforce existing hierarchical biases. Experts assert that the primary goal of engagement optimization is to promote outrage, fear, and sensational value, which is of low social value and particularly harmful to women writers who focus on silenced issues and social advocacy.

From the data, four main themes crystallized:

1. Network impacts, topic stereotyping, and historical data bias create inequities that affect visibility.
2. Risks of online harassment toward women are heightened, and as a result, high-risk coping settings are adopted.
3. Contrasting stakeholder frameworks reveal perceived neutrality versus structural bias.
4. Auditing, redesign, and inclusive development measures require transparency aligned with converging frameworks.

The integration of lived experience, comparative understanding, and technical analysis allows for an interdisciplinary understanding of how automated processes function in digital journalism to reproduce and amplify gender bias.

Conclusion

This research revealed that algorithms integrated into the functions of digital platforms operate as automated gatekeepers that are non-neutral and that influence, limit, and bias the visibility, engagement, impact, and safety of women journalists. The downgrading of women's content, the subordination of women-related issues and perspectives, the amplification of harassment through engagement-driven systems, and the hegemonic neglect of feminized topics all exemplify a socio-technical system that reinforces persistent digital patriarchy within the sphere of public discourse.

The disproportionate allocation of visibility among journalists and the bidirectional causality between platform features and visibility bias are demonstrably intentional. Such patterns reveal the overwhelming and often unspoken impact of predominantly male training data, gendered proxy variables, optimization for negative or irresponsible virality, and insufficiently diverse and responsible design. The impact of these dynamics on women journalists manifests as profound self-censorship, participation constraints, and voice suppression. These effects undermine individual career prospects as well as the pluralism, inclusivity, and democratic robustness of online public discourse.

These challenges cannot be addressed using simple technical fixes. Meaningful challenge tackling requires a paradigm shift, reorienting algorithmic objectives to be equitable, safe, situationally and representationally diverse, and deeply and constructively engaged. Digital Platforms, Media, AI, Journalism, Policy, Regulation, and Civil Society must all collaborate to include transparency, regular gender-sensitive inclusion, disparate data, diverse development, and accountability as core principles to redesign societal algorithms. Only by redesigning these social algorithms can Digital Platforms redesign their capability to become a Digital Democracy that supports diverse, safe, and digitally equitable Journalism.

Recommendations

- Regular Third-Party Audits of Algorithms, with a focus on Gender Equity, should become compulsory. Audits should assess visibility, abuse, and gender disparities in the recommendation systems, organizational networks, and gender-dominated networks.

Suggested metrics and assessment parameters include reach, impressions, engagement, and harassment. Findings must be provided in a Before-After format and in easy-to-read, non-technical reports.

- Provide Reports on the Algorithmic and Data-Based Decision Processes to promote accountability. Departments of AI and Algorithms must develop easy-to-use interfaces to demonstrate filtering algorithms that promote abusive content and suppress content that is important to promote. Reports must include criteria such as values of engagement, the role of proxies, and the algorithms and their weights that impact content about journalism.
- Design Thorough Training Modules on Digital Literacy and Safety: Create and disseminate course materials with journalism and news associations, newsrooms, and schools that cover the workings of algorithms and their biases, ethical optimizations, strategies for wart posting, recognition of harassment, adjustment of privacy settings, digital safety and abuse reporting, harassment recognition, and digital safety. Also, consider training modules for male journalists to enhance awareness and promote allyship, and establish peer support networks for coping and amplification strategies among women journalists. Additionally, integrate the curricula into journalism education at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and conduct updated workshops in response to platform changes.
- Incorporate Diversity and Inclusion in Iterative Processes of Algorithm Design and Governance: Employ women at all levels of AI research, product management, data annotation, moderation, and decision-making, and support this with recruitment, retention, and mentorship of women, along with bias training for all. Assess, diversify, and audit training datasets to include the journalistic work of women, as well as voices, topics, and regions that have been historically underrepresented.
- Create New Engagement Metrics that are Inclusive and Test New Systems: Set standards that incorporate depth, factual correctness, and constructive engagement and representation rather than volume, in order to diminish the emphasis on sensationalism and conflict. Create and implement safe and equitable algorithms and provide transparency.
- Fostering Collaborative Co-Design and Industry Norms: Collaborative design workshops should be conducted to engage journalists, gender equity advocates, civil society, and AI practitioners in prototyping fairer systems and identifying blind spots. News organizations should adopt gender-bias algorithmic impact performance evaluations. Additionally, industry standards and inclusive design benchmarks for journalistic contexts should be established to ensure cross-tier stakeholder compliance.
- Support for Policy and Regulatory Frameworks: Demanding transparency frameworks with gender impact assessments and accountability for harmful algorithmic gatekeeping in journalism should be framed as an accountability issue in democracy, rather than a matter of business discretion.

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