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Article

# Gender-Say Gap in TV Organisations: A Comparative Study of Gender Differentials in Ghana and Nigeria News Channels

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Abstract

This study investigated gender-say gap in top TV organisations in Ghana and Nigeria to understand if there is a systematic silencing of the voices of any gender group through differentials in number of news anchors, boardroom staff and speaking times of guests, eye witnesses and vox pops. Six leading TV channels in Ghana and Nigeria were studied. The researcher content-analysed (a) websites of the channels, and (b) their news programmes. A 298-hour corpus of news programmes from the channels was coded using manual counting. It was found that there were more women presenters than men in the select TV stations; there was a significant male dominance in the management and leadership of the TV companies; there was a significant difference between the speaking time of men and women ( $t(10) = 12.96957, p = 0.001069$ ); and while women occupy important editorial positions, final editorial power, governance and agenda-setting authority are often monopolized by men. While there is a significant number of woman TV presenters in the TV stations, their underrepresentation in boardrooms and in speaking time is underlining. Also, there are still institutional and discursive mechanisms that maintain mutedness and constrain women’s substantive influence even where they occupy visible positions.

**Keywords:** gender say gap; gender stereotypes; TV; patriarchy; SDG 5; SDG 10

## 1. Introduction

Much research and policy attention has been paid over time to the systematic differences in how various gender groups are represented and treated in society and by cultural industries such as the media, advertising and films, among others. This accounts for the amount of studies and public opinion on hypermasculinity (Ejem 2022; Alam 2022; Matos 2024), gender pay gap (Halim et al. 2023), gender stereotypes (Heilman et al. 2024), woman objectification (Ejem et al. 2022), gendered vulnerabilities to disasters (Ejem et al. 2025) and became the core of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 10. More recently, researchers have conceptualized what they call the gender say gap, which is the outcome of persistent oppression from a dominant voice shrouding over the muffled voices of the less powerful through various silencing treatments (Mason 2022; Yih 2022). Gender say gap has been used by some researchers to refer to the silence of, and silencing of (mostly) woman voices, ideas and insights by society - or those of the less powerful gender by the dominant one (Mason 2022; Sampson 2018).

In patriarchal societies, gender say gap or gender silencing manifests in the invisibility of women and minority gender groups as expert authorities in business and public life (Mason, 2022), lack of confidence by mostly women to report gender-based violence, underrepresentation of women at senior level in boardrooms, giving women less speaking time than men in the media, and other manifestations of systematic silencing. In patriarchal societies, women’s voices are suppressed, while at the same time, there are those who are coopted in support of the system of power.

The scope of the Global Gender Index Gap covers the disparity that exists in four significant domains: health, education, economic participation and opportunity, and politics (Gutiérrez-

Martínez et al. 2021) but the media is an important aspect in the pursuit of global gender equality (Sharma et al. 2021). The mainstream media has been a more profound aspect in the Global Gender Index Gap because they have been severally accused of promoting systematic differences in gender treatment and portrayal all over the world (Van der Pas and Aaldering 2020; Asr et al. 2021; Santoniccolo et al. 2023). Also, cultures and societies are heavily influenced by visual depictions and representations, which are primarily shaped and presented by the mass media (Anyanwu et al. 2023). It is, therefore, believed that treating gender representation in the media with fairness and ethical consideration should be viewed as a professional goal, akin to upholding principles of accuracy, fairness, and honesty (White 2009).

Content analyses across countries and decades have consistently proven that TV reinforces gender stereotypes through the way they depict men as dominant, authoritative while showing women as dependent, nurturing and primarily concerned with domestic roles (Hermann et al., 2021; Gjylbegaj & Radwan, 2025). Research has also shown that there is also gender disparities in the media in the roles and positions people occupy and the privileges they enjoy (Matole et al., 2024; Ross & Padovani, 2019). In that vein, researchers have identified the contrast between men and women concerning their salaries, participation, and visibility in the media workplace (Harris, 2017), having fewer women as news sources in the media, as well as fewer women news anchors, reporters, and boardroom members; and when you have them in those roles mentioned, in what rung of the scalar chain do they sit on? What kind of issues do the woman presenters present or report about?

Research evidence shows that the statistical representation of women in journalism compared to men in both news collecting and content has become the main focus of gender approaches to media studies ((Matole et al., 2024; Ross & Padovani, 2019; Collins, 2011; Ozer, 2023). Similarly, there is also evidence that women are given less speaking time than men in the media with research by Institut National de l'Audiovisuel in France showing that women occupy one-third of the speaking time on television and radio (Doukhan et al. 2018), and 44.4% in the USA (Statista 2024). While these have been reported in many studies as a global challenge (Harris 2017; Mason, 2022), the characteristics of a patriarchal society make them even more palpable because of the structural inequalities in these societies. Early evidence already suggests that women were largely marginalized and underrepresented in African media, almost to the point of being invisible (Gross 2023).

Two West African countries that have been noted for their strong patriarchal traditions include Ghana and Nigeria (Bawa et al., 2012), even though their specific manifestations, regional variations and intensity are said to differ due to ethnic, cultural and historical factors. In Ghana, there are cultural, social, and religious factors, leading to rigid gender roles and legitimizing man authority (Sikweyiya et al., 2020). In Northern Ghana, especially, women face significant obstacles to leadership (Adongo et al., 2023). The cultural and social norms in Nigeria entails that traditional gender roles limit women's autonomy, and this extends to workplace where women face discrimination, limited career advancement and are excluded from leadership roles (Adisa et al., 2019; Nwano & Akhirome-Omonfuegbe, 2024; Imhanrenialena et al., 2024). In the context of media representation, it has been argued that the authority to shape the media and public agenda remains primarily a privilege enjoyed by men in Nigeria (Izunwanne et al. 2020), and in Ghana, despite progress towards gender equality and navigating entrenched system, men continue to dominate key positions in Ghana's broadcast media (Danso et al., 2025) and there is still mixed picture of progress and stagnation for women in journalism in the country (Yeboah-Banin et al., 2020). Research has shown that while reasonable progress has been made in the recent past to increase women's visibility in Ghana and Nigerian media and in broader socio-political contexts, they may be sometimes accompanied by constrained agenda-setting, restricted voice, and assimilation into dominant discursive norms (Emwinromwankhoe, 2023; Birdsall & Carmi, 2022; Syawal et al., 2024) – all of which are markers of systematic silencing.

In line with the macro picture and economic-structural dimensions of news system, there are cultural, structural, institutional, technological and economic forces that interact to shape how news is produced, distributed and consumed (Reese, 2019; Schudson, 2002; Knudson, 2008). The macro

picture, in particular, posits that the cultural realities in society where journalism operates determines whose voices get amplified and what contents get prioritised, while the economic-structural dimension look at the institutional arrangement and market logics that shape the media system (Flew & Stepnik, 2024; Ryfe, 2021; Knudson, 2008).

This has also been accentuated by Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influence which describe the micro- and macro-forces that affect news content in an environment (Koroma, 2023). In this study, we are looking at individual level of analysis which include how a demographic feature (gender) may affect content production; routine level of analysis which refers to how power is exercised within the media organisations; and social systems which refers to how media producers reproduce power relations in society (Rodarte & Richardson, 2024; Kwanda & Lin, 2020; Umejei, 2018). Therefore, the units of analysis would include the characteristics of boardroom members of media organisations who make content decisions, news anchors/anchor persons who use their vocal presence to deliver the content and provide perspectives, experts/guests who are invited (or interviewed on news scenes or on the street) by the broadcast stations to provide context to news of the day. These are the people who use their influence and speaking time to control, filter and shape reality, and give saliency to social issues; and those who control these groups control the voice of the media and silence the less visible groups.

From a gender perspective, is there any evidence to suggest that, due to the individual and routine forces in TV organisations and the broader socio-cultural and economic structures in the environment in which the Ghana and Nigeria media systems operate, there is still a systematic silencing of the voices of a certain gender group through skewed composition among those who decide TV content, those who deliver the content and those who provide context to the content with their expertise and opinions? What is the most visible gender among presenters, news editors, management (and directors) in Ghana and Nigeria TV station? What are the cultural, structural, institutional, technological and economic forces that predicate gender representations in Ghana and Nigeria media system? Examining these will help the researcher to understand whether gendered visibility in Ghana and Nigeria media systems arises from deeply entrenched institutional and cultural structures and not merely from isolated instances of bias.

Therefore, the objectives of this research include to:

- a. examine the more visible group gender among presenters, news editors, management (and directors) in Ghana and Nigeria TV station;
- b. know if there is a systematic silencing of the voices of a certain gender group through speaking time given to guests/speakers (including eye witnesses and vox pops);
- c. find out the cultural, structural, institutional, technological and economic forces that predicate gender representations in Ghana and Nigeria media system.

## 1.2. Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on the feminist muted theory. Propounded by Shirley and Ed-win Adener in 1968, the theory explains why some groups are silenced in society. It states that there are social hierarchies in society where some groups, usually men, are placed in a more privileged positions than others. The more privileged groups are dominant because they are given more voice than those that are not as privileged, usually the woman and non-binary groups. The dominant group at the top of the social hierarchy holds significant influence over societal communication. It is their dominance that leads to the phenomenon of muteness, meaning the silenced state of marginalised groups because of their lack of power. In patriarchal societies, according to Clemence and Jairos (2011), the dominant group usually consists of men in patriarchal societies, while the muted group usually consist of women who largely occupy lower-level positions in such societies. Those in dominant positions not only control resources but also the communicative structures of society, leading to the systematic muting and under-representation of less privileged voices in both public and institutional spheres – including the media.



While feminist muted theory provides a foundation for understanding gender disparities in media (Jan et al., 2023), this study focuses on examining the persistence and nature of representational inequalities in Nigerian and Ghanaian media, and more broadly across Africa. It highlights the gap in research regarding the structural and cultural factors that reinforce gender silencing within African newsrooms and content production. Projects such as the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) have shown persistent gender imbalances in media staffing and representation in Africa (GMMP, 2020; GMMP, 2025). However, these studies typically do not explain the underlying mechanisms through which these imbalances are maintained within broader social structures.

The recent rise in visibility and influence by women in powerful positions in the world, including Africa (Chitsamatanga, 2023; Ilesanmi, 2018), has been discussed in relation to its implication on feminist muted theory and critiques of media voice (Syawal et al., 2024; Jan et al., 2023). However, there is a consensus in recent scholarship that representation alone does not guarantee gender advancement as elite presence can coexist with structural silencing (Agarwal, 2023). Researchers conclude that formal visibility of women may be sometimes accompanied by constrained substantive influence, restricted voice, and assimilation into dominant discursive norms (Emwinromwankhoe, 2023; Birdsall & Carmi, 2022; Syawal et al., 2024).

The main arguments of this study are to investigate whether gendered silencing occurs in Ghana and Nigeria media at managerial, presentational, and content levels, and explore how these processes are shaped by broader cultural, structural, institutional, technological and economic forces. The study will essentially examine the processes of systematic silencing in these TV stations by investigating who sets agenda, whose knowledge is legitimated and whose opinion is marginalised.

In contrast to the empirical findings of the GMMP, the central argument of this study is to provide a theory-driven analysis by linking feminist muted theory, macro picture and economic-structural dimensions with contemporary media practices in Ghana and Nigeria. By situating recent empirical findings within comparative and historical frames, the study aims to evaluate present-day gender representations in select media and determine whether patterns have changed or persisted over time. Thus, the study seeks to explain and theorize if (and why) the under-representation and muting of women voices continue in African media, using context-specific analysis.

2. Materials and Methods

Study Design

The researcher analysed the gender differences in the compositions of management staff (including directors), news anchors, guests, eye witnesses and vox pops of select TV organisations in West Africa. This was done by:

- (a) Content-analysing the websites of the select TV stations and, in some cases, the SignalHire site, an HR analytics, recruiting and benchmarking platform that provides real-time and historical trends on employers’ hiring activities, workforce flows and company climate. This was done to examine the gender differences in the compositions of management staff and news anchors.
- (b) Content-analysing news programmes on the YouTube channels of the select TV stations between January and June 2024 to examine the speaking time of man and woman guests, eye witnesses and vox pops. The YouTube channels are part of the stations’ dual-broadcasting system. It is the same content on their traditional stations that they distribute on their YouTube channels to expand reach.

Based on Stempel’s (1952) method for sample size selection in content analysis, two constructed weeks were created using ChatGPT-generated randomization. Those 14 days made up the primary research dates that the news programmes on the YouTube channels were examined. Hester and Dougall (2007) explain that at least two constructed weeks are needed to accurately represent online news platforms.

The constructed weeks were as follows:

Week 1

Monday     March 12

Tuesday May 7  
Wednesday February 14,  
Thursday April 1  
Friday June 21  
Saturday May 18  
Sunday February 25  
Week 2:  
Monday February 5  
Tuesday January 16  
Wednesday February 21  
Thursday March 14  
Friday January 19  
Saturday February 24  
Sunday March 10

The use of constructed week procedure mitigated the bias that might arise from under- or over-representing some days (Kim et al., 2018). The researcher analysed all the videos of news programmes uploaded on the YouTube channels on those days.

These videos and websites helped to provide insights into whether there is a systematic silencing of any gender group in these media systems, and to infer any non-random reason why a gender group is more visible than the other. This research classified the gender groups as man and woman, in line with the two normative gender categorizations in West Africa societies.

Ghana and Nigeria were studied, being the two largest media markets in West Africa with TV market revenues of 900 million and 192 million US dollars respectively by 2023 (Statista 2023). As seen in Table 1, three leading TV stations in each of the two countries were studied, summing up to 6 TV stations. The TV ratings were derived from Statista.com, GeoPoll and CANAL+, and were from 2022/23 data. All the TV stations are based in the largest media markets in Ghana and Nigeria – Lagos and Accra, respectively. Other inclusion criteria were that the management and employee lists of the TV stations and their organograms are available on the organizations’ websites; must be private or community news TV stations and the stations must have been in existence for at least 5 years.

Table 1. Select TV companies in Ghana and Nigeria.

| Countries | TV Stations                          | Ownership | Year Established |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Nigeria   | Channels TV                          | Private   | 1992             |
|           | TVC                                  | Private   | 2007             |
|           | Arise TV                             | Private   | 2013             |
|           | CITI TV (now known as ChannelOne TV) | Private   | 2018             |
| Ghana     | UTV                                  | Private   | 1997             |
|           | Adom TV                              | Private   | 2009             |

Stations that focus on specialised programming such as sports, movies, music, etc. were also excluded.

Coding

The Gender Count Code sheet, designed by the researcher, was used to collect employees’ data from signalhire.com, the organizations’ websites and YouTube channels. Six (6) independent coders, trained onsite by the researchers, coded these online platforms. Each coder was assigned to a TV station.

For the YouTube channels, the coders coded a large 298-hour corpus of news programmes from the 6 stations. The coding was concluded in 41 days.

In view of the objectives of this study, these coders coded members of management staff (management and executive directors) who make decision about the TV offerings; and news anchors, the front-persons who anchor the programmes; and guests, eye witnesses and vox pops, in the news programmes who provide context to news of the day.

The coding process involved accessing the list of employees and managements of the TV Stations from signalhire.com and the organizations’ websites, and sifting through their names and roles, looking for those designated as management (management and executive directors) and news anchors, and entering them into the Gender Count Code sheet. This was followed by identifying their genders where they were obvious, through their accompanying photographs or their brief biographies; otherwise, those names whose genders were not apparent were looked up on LinkedIn.

The coding process also included manually counting the speaking time of man and woman guests, eye witnesses and vox pops on news programmes uploaded on the YouTube channels. This was considered a more exhaustive methodology for counting the number of men and women and the number of minutes that men and women spoke as guests, eye witnesses and vox pops, instead of using automatic descriptors (see Doukhan, et al. 2024)

To test the inter-rater reliability, the Krippendorff’s Alpha coefficient was used. With  $\alpha = 0.876$ , it demonstrates high reliability of data coded from the six stations and consistency in the coding and also indicates that the data is not distorted by random differences in judgement.

*Data Analysis*

In the analysis, percentages were used at the descriptive levels to examine how the man presenters compare with the women. The Chi-square was used to examine the differences in gender distribution across the 6 stations. and T-test was used to compare the speaking time of man and woman guests. All of these enabled the researcher to draw inference on the representation of the gender groups in the select TV stations in Ghana and Nigeria. All the analyses were based on the SPSS.

**3. Results**

*3.1. Quantitative Content Analysis*

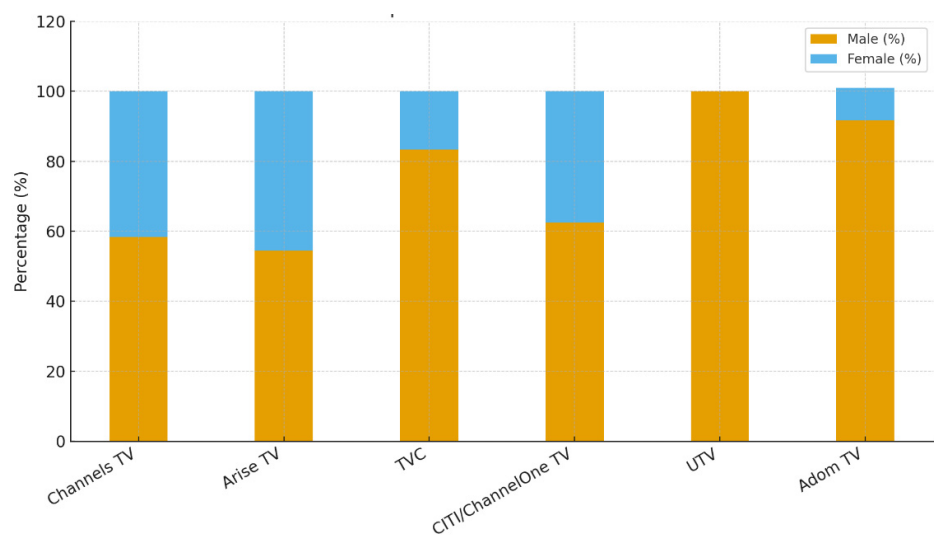
This section presents data from the quantitative content analysis of the channel’s websites, SignalHire website and news programmes on YouTube channels of the 6 stations.

**Table 2.** Gender differential analysis of presenters in the select TV stations.

| TV Stations                          | Man | %    | Woman | %    |
|--------------------------------------|-----|------|-------|------|
| Channels TV                          | 6   | 33.3 | 12    | 66.7 |
| Arise TV                             | 4   | 28.6 | 10    | 71.4 |
| TVC                                  | 7   | 29.2 | 17    | 70.8 |
| CITI TV (now known as ChannelOne TV) | 6   | 66.7 | 3     | 33.3 |
| UTV                                  | 3   | 25   | 9     | 75   |
| Adom TV                              | 4   | 36.4 | 7     | 63.6 |

All 6 selected TV stations, except ChannelOne TV, Ghana (33.3%), have significantly more woman presenters than man. This indicates a reverse gender gap in the composition of presenters who deliver the news to the audience in TV stations in Ghana and Nigeria. That is to say, more women seem to be in positions where they use their vocal presence to deliver the content and provide perspectives. But to what extent are they part of the boardroom members of media organisations who make content decisions?

Figure 1 shows that male dominance is consistent among members of management (including executive directors) in the six TV companies, although the intensity varies. While Arise TV (Nigeria) and Channels TV (Nigeria) are closest to parity, UTV (Ghana) has zero women presence, and Adom TV (Ghana) shows near women exclusion. Overall, men make up three-quarter of the total number of management staff (and executive directors) (75.1%), while women make up one-quarter (24.9%).



**Figure 1.** Gender differential analysis of management and directors in the select TV stations.

The Chi-square test of independence was used to examine the differences in gender distribution across the 6 stations. With  $p < 0.05$  [ $\chi^2$ : 95.87; df:5], the results show that the frequencies of man and woman members of management (and executive directors) differ significantly across the TV stations.

The researcher performed a t-test to compare the speaking time of man and woman guests, those who gave eye witness account of events, participants of vox pop and street intercept interviewees in the six TV companies. The test in Table 3 shows that the speaking time of men (68.383) was higher than the speaking time of women (31.6). With  $p < 0.05$ , the tests showed that there was a significant difference between the speaking time of men and women ( $t(10) = 12.96957$ ,  $p = 0.001069$ ).

**Table 3.** Gender differential analysis of speaking time of guests/speakers\*.

| TV Stations                          | Total Speaking Time | Man (%) | Mean   | Woman (%) | Mean | P(T<=t) two-tail |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------|--------|-----------|------|------------------|
| Channels TV                          |                     | 65.6    | 68.383 | 34.4      | 31.6 | 0.0000001        |
| Arise TV                             |                     | 59.9    |        | 40.1      |      |                  |
| TVC                                  |                     | 69.2    |        | 30.8      |      |                  |
| CITI TV (now known as ChannelOne TV) |                     | 70.6    |        | 29.4      |      |                  |
| UTV                                  |                     | 71.8    |        | 28.2      |      |                  |
| Adom TV                              |                     | 73.2    |        | 26.7      |      |                  |

\*including eye witnesses and vox pops.

3.2. Qualitative Content Analysis

Gender differential analysis of news editors in the select TV stations.

All three TV stations in Ghana (Adom TV, UTV and ChannelOne TV) have woman news editors. The women make up a less significant proportion of news editors in the three TV stations selected from Nigeria. There is a woman news editor for TVC, designated as the Director of News. Channels TV has two man news editors and a woman Deputy News Editor. While News Editor position is not



clearly distinguishable in available sources in Arise TV, the role is performed by a man who occupies the position of the Director of News and three men who serve as Deputy Directors of News.

Recent scholarship on Muted Group Theory and feminist critiques of media voice highlights the limits of numerical representation. While evidence in this study shows that 4 (66.7%) of the 6 TV stations have woman news editors, muted group research findings insist that representation alone does not guarantee gender advancement as elite presence can coexist with structural silencing (Birdsall & Carmi, 2022; Syawal et al., 2024).

Gender differential analysis of heads of the selected TV organizations.

All 6 stations except TVC (Nigeria) have Chairmen/CEO who are men. They include Samuel Attah-Mensah (ChannelOne TV, Ghana), Nduka Obaigbena (Arise TV), John Momoh (Channels TV, Nigeria), Kwasi Twum (Adom TV, Ghana), Osei Kwame (UTV, Ghana; Ernest Ofori Sarpong, the co-founder). The only outlier is TVC (Victoria Ajayi).

The implication of the information above is that men provide governance and oversight, and create a vital dynamic that shapes the overall success of most TV organisations in Ghana and Nigeria. Besides many other responsibilities, these CEOs develop content strategies and operational models (Sariol & Abebe, 2017), and the Chairmen work with the CEOs to ensure strategic decisions and ensure accountability (Shen, 2019; Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Almost all of these are done by men, meaning that men occupy very powerful positions in these stations, shape content strategies and operational models, and ensure strategic decisions and accountability.

#### 4. Discussion

The study found that there were more women presenters than men in the select TV stations in Ghana and Nigeria, even though the proportion varies according to the station. All 6 selected TV stations, except ChannelOne TV, Ghana (33.3%), have significantly more woman presenters than man. It can be inferred from this evidence that there is a significant increase in the number of woman journalists in West African newsrooms and it indicates a reverse gender gap in the composition of presenters who deliver the news to the audience in TV stations in Ghana and Nigeria. More women seem to be in positions where they use their vocal presence to deliver the content and provide perspectives. This also confirms the evidence in recent bodies of literature that strides continue to be made towards gender parity in the news reporter role (GMMP, 2025; GMMP, 2020). For instance, in a 2020 study, women outnumbered men as presenters by 54% (GMMP, 2020).

This finding also implies that the gender differentials of presenters in a media system is not shaped by broader sociopolitical structures nor predicated on gender norms in society. For instance, one would have thought that due to the patriarchal structures overtly embedded and reinforced within African societies, the proportion of man dominance is expected to be highest in all facets of the media (Akurugu et al., 2022; Govender and Muringa, 2025; Ncube 2021). On the contrary, there seems to be more male dominance in TV anchors in countries where patriarchy is less overtly institutionalized than in many Africa contexts, such as the UK and the US (Ng'eno, 2017; Ryan, 2019).

A study by Watson's (2020) on gender distribution of evening broadcast TV anchors on selected networks in the United States shows that men reported almost twice as much as women on NBC, ABC, CBS and PBS. Similarly, Nasruddin (2021) confirmed that men still dominate in the news industry but showed that South Africa is leading the US, UK and India in gender parity in the newsrooms with women consisting of 49% journalists and 42% in Kenya. Among the countries studied in different continents, the study showed that South Africa led in gender parity in the newsrooms with women consisting of 49% journalists, followed by the UK (47%), US (42-45%), Kenya (42%) and India (28%). The implication is that, contrary to expectation, the gender differentials in newsrooms are not predicated on gender norms in society.

However, since presence is not a sole marker of equity, this evidence has to be considered in the light of subsequent findings on the structural powers in these TV stations, and other indicators such as agenda-setting, authority, framing, representation, and the patterns and consistency of these markers across different stations (Jungherr et al., 2019). In the absence of other markers of equity, any

rise in female representation as TV anchors in Ghana and Nigeria aligns with the core of neoliberal feminism, which entails that these women achieved these positions through self-empowerment and not because of any legal and institutional factors that drive equality in these societies (Bennett, 2024; Akinbobola, 2019).

To what extent are women part of the boardroom members of these TV organisations, who make content decisions? Findings in this study shows that male dominance is consistent among members of management (including executive directors) in the six TV companies, although the intensity varies. While Arise TV (Nigeria) and Channels TV (Nigeria) are closest to parity, UTV (Ghana) has zero women presence, and Adom TV (Ghana) shows near women exclusion. Overall, men make up three-quarter of the total number of management staff (and executive directors) (75.1%), while women make up one-quarter (24.9%). The Chi-square test of independence shows that, with  $p < 0.05$  [ $\chi^2$ : 95.87; df:5], the frequencies of man and woman members of management (and executive directors) differ significantly across the TV stations.

This clearly shows the power relations between men and women in the media, and how men hold an enormous majority of power positions in these media houses. The implication is that men set the most media agenda and make the most boardroom decision in the media organisations. Relating to the previous findings about gender differentials in newsrooms, this finding corroborates evidence in literature that while women participation in newsrooms has increased in the global news media (Byerly 2016), they remain underrepresented in most top positions (Adams et al. 2022). Therefore, beyond making up more news anchors, the women in Ghana and Nigeria TV were not involved in decision-making and agenda of activities.

This support the claims that despite the democratic change, economic liberalization and intensified advocacy for women's equality in Ghana, there is no significant improvements in the status of women in the media industries (Gadzekpo, 2023), and few women own media, or occupy top governance and management positions (Byerly 2011). Gadzekpo (2023) attributes that to the proverbial glass ceiling that continues to perpetuate gross gender inequalities in decision-making positions in the Ghanaian media.

To provide further context to the male dominance among members of management in the six TV companies, it was found that all 6 stations except TVC (Nigeria) have Chairmen/CEO who are men. They include Samuel Attah-Mensah (ChannelOne TV, Ghana), Nduka Obaigbena (Arise TV), John Momoh (Channels TV, Nigeria), Kwasi Twum (Adom TV, Ghana), Osei Kwame (UTV, Ghana; Ernest Ofori Sarpong, the co-founder). The only outlier is TVC (Victoria Ajayi).

The reinforces that finding that men provide governance and oversight, and create a vital dynamic that shapes the overall success of most TV organisations in Ghana and Nigeria. Besides many other responsibilities, these CEOs develop content strategies and operational models (Sariol & Abebe, 2017), and the Chairmen work with the CEOs to ensure strategic decisions and ensure accountability (Shen, 2019; Bromiley & Rau, 2016). Almost all of these are done by men, meaning that men occupy very powerful positions in these stations, shape content strategies and operational models, and ensure strategic decisions and accountability. To situate this within the discussion on systematic silencing, researchers have largely looked beyond presence to various markers of silencing, including structural power (who owns and controls the media), who gets to speak (agenda-setting), whose knowledge is authoritative, whose voices are presented (framing), who gets visibility (representation), and patterns and consistency across different stations (Jungherr et al., 2019; Roslyng & Dindler, 2023; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Entman, 2007). Most of these variables are consistent with the influence and power of the leadership of the TV stations.

Ownership and leadership predicate the power dynamics of every organisation, including TV stations. According to the economic-structural dimensions of news systems, ownership structure determines the institutional arrangement and market logics that shape the media system (Flew & Stepnik, 2024; Ryfe, 2021; Knudson, 2008). This highlights why news and media representations are not only cultural or social expressions but also embedded within broader economic structures within

organisations. More so, there is a hierarchy of factors, unrelated to cultural values, that influence those owners and leaders in distributing and exercising power.

Yeboah-Banin et al.'s (2024) assertion that progress is visible in the status of women is only evidenced in the gender differentials of news editors in the select TV stations in Ghana and Nigeria. The data shows that all three TV stations in Ghana (Adom TV, UTV and ChannelOne TV) have woman news editors. The women make up a less significant proportion of news editors in the three TV stations selected from Nigeria. There is a woman news editor for TVC, designated as the Director of News. Channels TV has two man news editors and a woman Deputy News Editor. While News Editor position is not clearly distinguishable in available sources in Arise TV, the role is performed by a man who occupies the position of the Director of News and three men who serve as Deputy Directors of News.

This is, however, an important achievement in the visibility of women in Ghana and Nigeria as news editors are very influential in TV broadcasting. They select and display information, and thus contribute to shaping public views about issues (Alphonsus et al., 2022), occupying the position of gatekeepers (Conte, 2022). Those who occupy the position of news editors are profoundly influential in, not only shaping public perception, but also significant in driving visibility or reversing mutedness.

In relation to recent scholarship on Muted Group Theory and feminist critiques of media voice which highlights the limits of numerical representation, while evidence in this study shows that 4 (66.7%) of the 6 TV stations have woman news editors, muted group research findings insist that representation alone does not guarantee gender advancement as elite presence can coexist with structural silencing (Birdsall & Carmi, 2022; Syawal et al., 2024). Also, from a critical feminist theory perspective, there are still institutional and discursive mechanisms that maintain mutedness and constrain women's substantive influence even where they occupy visible positions such as news editors in these TV stations, such as the customary and legal structure in Ghana and Nigeria legitimize women's subordinate status and restrict autonomy (Akurugu et al., 2022; Gyan & Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2021), gendered expectations (Madsen, 2018), colonial and neoliberal legacies of having men as key media figures (Bawafaa, 2023), dominant discourses in politics and media revolve round men (Nartey, 2023), and there is evidence that discursive strategies have been used to exclude intersectional or radical feminist voice (Nartey, 2023).

While women occupy news editorial positions, which goes contrary to recent findings in related studies (Gumede, 2023; GMMP, 2020; GMMP, 2025), leadership in these media houses remains overwhelmingly male, reinforcing the glass ceiling effect (Babic & Hansez, 2021; Neugart & Zaharieva, 2025). Having men occupy the Chairmen/CEO in all 6 stations except TVC (Nigeria), it means that final editorial power, governance and agenda-setting authority are often monopolized by men, thus reflecting broader patriarchal political cultures in Ghana and Nigeria. With women occupying news editor positions and large presentational roles in these TV stations while men occupy most of the leadership roles, it means that progress is being made in vertical segregation in TV stations but the progress remains tokenistic because these women, as many as they might be, do not have the structural support to transform the TV newsroom culture. Moreover, the neo-liberal economic pressures in African newsrooms undermine sustained effects towards gender equity (Lewis, 2019).

This entails that the women who work in West African TV are still not empowered to give them abilities to promote balance in influence and gender representations. It is the empowerment of women that enhances their image in the audiovisual landscape (UNESCO 2017) and makes the media a suitable ground for expressions and claims (Pavarala et al., 2006). This also mirrors the dramatically ironic conclusion that the population of women in the media is undeniably more than the men yet women remain underrepresented in positions of power (Ammerman and Groysberg 2021).

The 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, recognising the centrality of the media in advancing gender equality (which would later become the target of SDGs 5 and 10), proposed increasing women's participation in and access to expression and decision making in and through

the media; and promoting a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media (Deehring and Belsey-Priebe 2021). Based on evidence from this research, it can be concluded that the women's participation in news delivery might have increased in West African TV, but access to expression and decision making in and through the media leave a lot to be imagined. This contradicts the evidence in research that there is a rise in women leadership in the media (Arguedes et al. 2024; Onalaja and Otokiti 2022)

The researcher performed a t-test to compare the speaking time of man and woman guests, those who gave eye witness account of events, participants of vox pop and street intercept interviewees in the six TV companies. The test shows that the speaking time of men (68.383) was higher than the speaking time of women (31.6). With  $p < 0.05$ , the tests showed that there was a significant difference between the speaking time of men and women ( $t(10) = 12.96957$ ,  $p = 0.001069$ ).

The speaking time extended to guests, vox pops or eyewitnesses. This seem to suggest the assertion in literature that the presence of women as decision makers in the media influence the selection of sources (Beckers et al., 2024). The woman members of the board are expected to be more conscious of their underrepresentation and should be, therefore, more prone to selecting woman sources (Niemi and Pitkänen 2017). True to that assertion, with fewer number of women who occupy elite roles in the media organisations, the proportion of women who participate as guests, eyewitnesses or vox pops are fewer. The Global Media Monitoring Project (2020) corroborated that women remain underrepresented in elite roles, far less likely to be interviewed as experts, but they score better in less active roles such as vox pops or eyewitnesses.

There seems to a widespread evidence that on average, men spoke more than women, in the many channels and nations studied. The Institut National de l'Audiovisuel's study shows that the amount of speaking time varies among TV channels but, on average, men spoke more than women, no matter the channel studied (Doukhan et al., 2018) understood that the speaking time of women in French TV and radio is evolving, but men have significantly higher speaking time. In a study by UNESCO (2018), only 10% of new stories focus on women and they make up only 20% of experts or spokespeople interviewed.

This is accentuated by GMMP (2025) which asserted that historical findings indicate that after a slow and steady rise in women's share of visibility and voice in the news, progress began flatlining in 2010, a trend that continues to date. Of the people heard, seen and spoken about in print and broadcast news, only 26% are women.

## 5. Conclusions

While there is a significant number of woman TV presenters in West Africa TV channels, their underrepresentation in boardrooms and in speaking time is very conspicuous and underlining. Women have made monumental achievements in recent history, but their representation in the media remain considerably low to that of their men counterparts. The implication of underrepresenting women's voices is that it strengthens stereotypes and denies them the chance to be recognised for their expertise and knowledge. More so, systemic biases and stereotypes can impact hiring and promotion decision and can lead to professional segregation and limited opportunity for career mobility. The major contribution of this study is that the rise in the proportion of woman presenters in the West Africa TV channels studied is not sufficient to challenge gender stereotypes in patriarchal societies. The media and the broader society where they exist must tackle those institutional and discursive mechanisms that maintain mutedness and constrain women's substantive influence even where they occupy visible positions in the TV stations. Therefore, addressing these mechanisms will help to achieve gender equality and create a diverse and inclusive media landscape.

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## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

|     |                   |
|-----|-------------------|
| TVC | TV Continental    |
| UTV | United Television |

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