

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gender representation and visibility of women in top-rated Netflix original films: A 2025 streaming media analysis

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Abstract

This research examines numerical data that reflects gender gap and underrepresentation of women in top-rated Netflix Originals during 1st January to 1st December, 2025 to find out if Netflix follows Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) pledges in its original content. We conducted mixed-method analysis on the 4 shortlisted films with 7.5 or above IMDb ratings, and used quantitative content analysis approach to find gender disparity and qualitative content analysis approach (Bechdel Test) to evaluate women's representation in films. The study found that men dominate as lead actors, writers, directors and producers, 75% of the films have a male-driven story, and 3 out of 4 films do not pass the Bechdel Test. The findings indicate imbalance within the selected high-rated sample. The research argues that the relation between streaming platforms and diverse content is more complex than they present in their discourse and aims to contribute to the discussion around this imbalance by encouraging critical thinking. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2026; 30 [16]: 112-122).

Keywords: Gender Gap, Women Representation, Netflix Originals, Visibility Politics, DEI

Résumé

Cette étude examine des données chiffrées reflétant les disparités entre les genres et la sous-représentation des femmes dans les productions originales Netflix les mieux notées entre le 1^{er} janvier et le 1^{er} décembre 2025, afin de déterminer si la plateforme respecte ses engagements en matière de diversité, d'équité et d'inclusion (DEI) dans ses contenus originaux. Nous avons mené une analyse à méthodes mixtes sur une sélection de quatre films affichant une note IMDb de 7,5 ou plus : une approche quantitative a permis de mettre en évidence les disparités entre les genres, tandis qu'une approche qualitative (le test de Bechdel) a servi à évaluer la représentation des femmes. Les résultats révèlent une domination masculine aux postes d'acteurs principaux, de scénaristes, de réalisateurs et de producteurs ; 75 % des films sont centrés sur une figure masculine, et trois films sur quatre ne satisfont pas aux critères du test de Bechdel. Ces conclusions mettent en évidence un déséquilibre au sein de l'échantillon de productions très bien notées. L'étude soutient que la relation entre les plateformes de streaming et la diversité des contenus est plus complexe que ne le laisse entendre leur discours officiel, et vise à alimenter le débat sur ce déséquilibre en encourageant une réflexion critique. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2026; 30 [16]: 112-122).

Mots-clés: Écart entre les genres, représentation des femmes, productions originales Netflix, politique de visibilité, DEI (Diversité, Équité et Inclusion)

Introduction

The dynamics of men and women's presence and representation in films or TV shows has always been a subject of debate for media researchers. The entertainment world has been quite vocal about leveling the playing field for men and women to ensure a future with opportunities and accountability for all. The rapid rise of streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+ and others has significantly transformed the global media landscape. These OTT platforms have been widely celebrated for democratizing content production and

offering creative freedom beyond the constraints of traditional television and cinema. Dominance of major streaming services in the post-pandemic world impacted the on and off-screen presence of women and it was observed that in 2022, 77% of the original films by streamers had no women directors, 72% films employed 0 to 4 women in off-scene positions, 49% original films on streaming services featured sole female than 38% sole male protagonists.¹

Hence the new marketplace of OTT platforms is gradually making room for marginalized women. Research studies claimed the platform's content commissioning process offers

more equal opportunity than other global buyers. They have achieved it through the frequent appeal of the idea that Netflix's stories "come from anywhere" and can "be loved everywhere."^{2, 3} A Netflix report emphasized that though Netflix or any other platforms were not able to change the numbers in terms of gender gap, they must be credited with starting unfamiliar conversations. On Netflix, 32.3% of directors were women across 63 US Originals in 2022. Keeping in view the percentage of women working as directors in streaming platforms, TV and at Sundance Film Festival, it is clear the exclusion of women during the hiring as film directors is a problem created by legacy studios and major companies.³ However, despite the hold of capitalist models on media creation, production, consumption and release, women are making their space in old power structures and hence changing the nature of content available on Netflix,^{4,5} for instance, Marvel Studios made a Netflix series with a strong woman as a leading character before developing it for the big screen. This highlights the need for a critical examination of streaming platforms as they encourage and provides a silver lining to women to look for parity, support and be able to tell and become a part of nuanced stories like never before.

Diverse content sells and it gained higher ratings and brought financial revenue, but despite those, opportunities for women are severely limited in leadership and creative roles like show creators or main characters. Women held their ground among film leads with 47.2 % in the post pandemic film world of 2021. Films written or directed by women in 2021 featured more diverse casts than those written or directed by White men.^{6, 7} However, the question arises that if diversity thrives, why the gender gap wavers in every study? Studies confirm that women are pushing towards a greater visibility in world cinema but are met with obstacles. The industry culture and work environment are riddled with problems like gender discrimination, unfair treatment, lower pay scales, and marginalization in job opportunities.⁸ Women were portrayed as docile beings to the 21st century's tales of empowered women.^{9,10,11}

The Hollywood enterprise's commercialization added to the marginalization of female filmmakers by restricting them to traditional gender roles. Women are underrepresented both on

and off screen in Netflix Global Original programming in 2019.¹² It was also noted that the number of female creators employed across broadcast and streaming has fallen down to 23 percent from 26 percent (in 2022-2023) and it was 30 percent the year prior to that. Similarly it was observed only 43% for on-screen women characters in speaking roles.¹ The platform maintains a gender inequality that shows that Netflix is a "man's medium." Another study found out that women are underrepresented by almost 10 percentage points, whereas men are overrepresented by 8 in Spanish shows.¹³ Netflix endorsed the dire situation of gender gap in the directorial chair where the percentage of women directors across 1,800 top films from 2007 to 2024 is only 6.6% and the ratio of individual men to women directors across the 18 years is 8.7 to 1.⁴

A significant number of researchers identified the constant limited representation of women, both on-screen and behind the camera. Additionally, these studies concluded that despite social movements, there were significant differences in budgets, box office success and the percentage of women in key positions amongst the highest-grossing films of 2018 that were directed by men vs. by women.^{14, 15-18}

Media is an active agent and can shift the global narrative; it is also worth mentioning that the change occurs not just by telling new stories, but it also depends on who has the power to tell those stories.¹⁹ Female characters in male-directed films are more monolithic.^{20, 21, 22} This also reflected the need for widespread efforts that go beyond the gender of the director.^{12, 23} Another report suggested that women characters filled all lead/ co-lead roles and nearly 50% of main cast/series regular character positions in 2021 on Netflix. Since OTT's are less constrained by censorship and budgets so filmmakers have freedom of expression and web shows have given space to new themes, allowing plurality of stories and more representation.^{24,25, 26} It is challenging norms and stereotypes, though this participation alone cannot change everything, it needs more women in decision-making roles.^{15, 27} The report also mentioned that the platform has better hiring practices; however, there is room for improvement in terms of female-speaking characters and more gender balanced stories.²⁸

Evident gap: Lack of evaluation of OTT DEI policies

With Netflix pledging to Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity programs and Fund for Creative Equity 2023 Update, the OTT giant has the power to challenge gender, culture and traditional norms.²⁹ Netflix reported that the percentage of women directors working on top films has reached a plateau. Though the numbers have significantly increased as compared to the abysmal state in the past, the pattern did not show a continuous rise. Despite these high-profile conversations of diversity made by the renowned OTTs, the progress is rather mixed.⁴ The literature reviewed indicated that there is limited work available to review the efficiency and results of the new DEI policies and practices that most streaming platforms boast about. Gender inequality continues to exist in this modern era and Netflix is no exception. Researchers label these greater screen diversity pledges as mere “performative acts” by the entertainment industry that are not valid steps towards bringing any change.^{30, 27}

This research is particularly relevant, as global conversations around gender equity, diversity, and representation in media industries intensify, and as streaming platforms increasingly shape cultural narratives and audience perceptions. It identifies patterns of gender imbalance within OTT platforms that can help inform policy interventions, support impartial production practices and promote authentic and diverse storytelling in the digital age. The research concludes with the limitations of the data and its subsequent findings and how significant they can be for future research on gendered politics, suggesting that the relationship between streaming giants and visibility of women and their representation is far more complex than it appears in Netflix’s business models.

Theoretical framework

Feminist film theory

Feminist Film theory is ideal to look at how media enable the suppression of women. It is the basis to examine how gender is represented in media, particularly in films, and how female creators in the position of power can challenge deep-rooted gender portrayals. Feminist filmmakers challenge the male gaze, and explore storylines and visual approaches

that cater to female perspectives. The theory gives tools to analyze how representation matters in terms of culture and power. It takes cinema as cultural practice and considers issues of gender representation, objectification; repeated distorted image of women and its impact on audience as central to this.³¹ Researchers pointed out how mainstream cinema objectifies women from a male perspective and emphasized that female stories explore identity, personal growth and relationships while challenging gender roles and stereotypes.^{17,32} Feminist films portray different female experiences and critically break apart the patriarchal storytelling.³³⁻³⁵ On the other hand, researchers also explored how media restricts women’s agency, their role, ambition and opportunities and found a link between exposure to objectifying and sexualized media to an increase in women confirming to gender norms.^{36,37,17} Media has a crucial role to play in changing the narrative towards gender equality which then pressurize the society and trending culture to lessen harmful portrayal of women.³⁸ Although having women creators is important, how they choose to restructure the cinematic experience and prioritize the end of patriarchal hegemony is more crucial.³⁹

Platform studies/ Political economy theory

Platform Studies/ Political Economy Theory is relevant to this study to identify the patterns of power flow and economic organization in OTT platforms like Netflix and how despite their tall claims they struggle to fulfill their gender diversity, equity and inclusivity pledges. Streaming does not equate to gender equality or representation, despite OTT platforms commitments to inclusive and diverse content, they fail to achieve it.⁴⁰ A comparison of Dutch streaming platforms (Netflix and Disney+) to broadcasters disclosed underrepresentation of women and seniors, reinforcement of gender and health stereotypes, and poor depiction of minority groups. Narayan emphasized that digital platforms essentially work on the principles of political economy and it is related to employment, capital, and the state.⁴¹ Additionally, the financial base (funding mechanism) of any streaming content determines the politics of sexual representation it propagates.⁴² The business model, ownership dynamic and technical liberties are the key factors to decide how a platform

will represent gender. Dominant corporate platforms reduce the aftereffects of control by using rhetoric of inclusivity and diversity which often have a "less-than-straightforward relationship to politics of sexuality". The practical reasons like funding sources and ownership decides the ideology and content Netflix promotes.

Methods

Study design

The study employs mixed method analysis to investigate the gender gap and representation of women in top rated feature-length Netflix Original movies. The corpus of analysis includes films that were released during the time period of 1st January, 2025 to 1st December, 2025 and have good Internet Movie Database (IMDb) ratings (7.5 or above) documented during the selected duration. The score is the basis of film selection criteria. IMDb score is a renowned tool to judge a movie's success due to its large datasets of audience ratings which gives it statistical reliability. IMDb uses a weighted average formula which decreases the chances of fake ratings and review bombing. Its millions of users also reflect diversity in opinions, rather than just selected critics' views. 7.5 or above rating is generally a benchmark for a good film. Highly acclaimed films like *The Shawshank Redemption* and *The Godfather* are both rated above 7.5 on IMDb. These thresholds are widely accepted scales which are derived from IMDb's Top 250 list in which most films have 7.5 or above ratings.⁴³

The study is limited to Netflix Original Films which are defined as: "The status Netflix gives to the show/film. This may include the following; Netflix commissioned and produced it, has exclusive international streaming rights, has co-produced it with another network and/or is a continuation of a previously canceled show. Mostly, a film or show is defined as a "Netflix Original if you can only watch it on Netflix in your respective country".⁴⁴ A list of 111 Netflix Originals was compiled with the aid of Netflix release schedule provided on What's on Netflix,⁴⁵ and then this collection was rigorously checked on Netflix streaming platform by playing each film to observe the signature opening that signifies an Original title.

Sampling & procedure

Purposive Criterion Sampling in two phases. The first phase analyzes the gender gap in leadership positions like writer, director, producer and lead actor of the film. This determines the number of women and men in authoritative creative roles in Netflix Originals in 2025, as Table 1 shows. The coding procedures of the study strictly follow the operational definition of a lead actor in a film as "a performer who receives top billing in film's official credits/ has most screentime/ is central to the narrative and/or is officially categorized as 'lead' in major award systems or film databases".⁴⁶ Names of characters in the film, gender pronouns and conversations (when names were gender neutral) were chief parameters to determine gender for lead roles. Profiles and interviews of writers, directors and producers were the source of determining their respective genders. In case of multiple actors, writers, directors or producers in any category, each name was coded and computed in its corresponding group to get the proportion.

The second phase conducts Bechdel Test on selected Netflix Originals with high IMDb ratings to evaluate the representation of women in films. In order for a film to pass the test, it must fulfill the following criteria:

- a. It should have at least two named women in it;
- b. Who have a conversation with each other;
- c. Which is about something other than a man

The study includes data from crowd-sourced information provided on The Bechdel Test database. When a movie being reviewed was not available in the database, personal review was conducted by watching the film based on the Bechdel criteria, as Table 2 shows. The sample size of the study is small as only 4 films remain after filtering through the IMDb ratings for the duration of 11 months under review. However, films were reviewed scene by scene, frame by frame and with attention to dialogues to analyze the gender disparity in authoritative roles. Over 428 minutes of running time was screened repeatedly over successive weeks to conduct the Bechdel Test and access women's representation in the selected films in order to maintain the study's validity and viability. Bechdel Test was conducted by one reviewer; films were coded over multiple weeks to verify every subset

repeatedly in order to reduce subjective bias in the coding process and improve coding reliability.

Netflix and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) alignment

A short analysis of Netflix's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) statements and public reports to compare rhetoric and actual data achieved from this study to expose the numerical gaps. This showed how much of Netflix's claims translate actually into films they produce. If Netflix pledged X% of women Directors, Writer. Producers or Actors, but the reality showed Y% hence the gap is Z% (X-Y).

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval not applicable. This study analysed publicly available content of Netflix Originals and did not involve human/animal participants, clinical trials, personal data and direct human/animal interaction. The study adhered to the established principles of academic integrity, objectivity and responsible research conduct. All content was analysed purely for scholarly purpose, and the findings are reported accurately and transparently to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the research

Results

State of netflix originals

Out of 111 feature films released from 1st January, 2025 to 1st December. 2025 on Netflix, merely 4 passed the good IMDb rating criteria (scored 7.5 or above). It shows that only 3.6% of Netflix Original content is good enough to get user approval on IMDb. Not a single Netflix Original scored 8.2 or higher which shows zero critically acclaimed films. The IMDb ratings suggest that only 4 films were liked, enjoyed or loved by the masses during the understudied period, while 107 failed to grab the attention of the audience (Table-1; Figure 1)

As the world's leading streaming platform, Netflix has reached 301.6 million paid subscribers globally as of August 2025.⁴⁷ This demands additional care on the quality of the films commissioned, produced and co-produced by the giant.

Gender equality ratio

Looking at the gender of lead actor in each movie, we concluded that 3 out of the 4 movies in the sample have men as protagonists (75%). Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl and Frankenstein have men in leading roles, while Train Dreams has a man narrating the entire story of a male protagonist. Only KPop Demon Hunters featured main characters of both genders in equal number. Train Dreams boasted of two female characters but both were used majorly as plot devices. So, KPop Demon Hunters is the only film here which has women as central characters that drive the story. The rest do not have women on center stage or titular characters (Table 1; Figure 1)

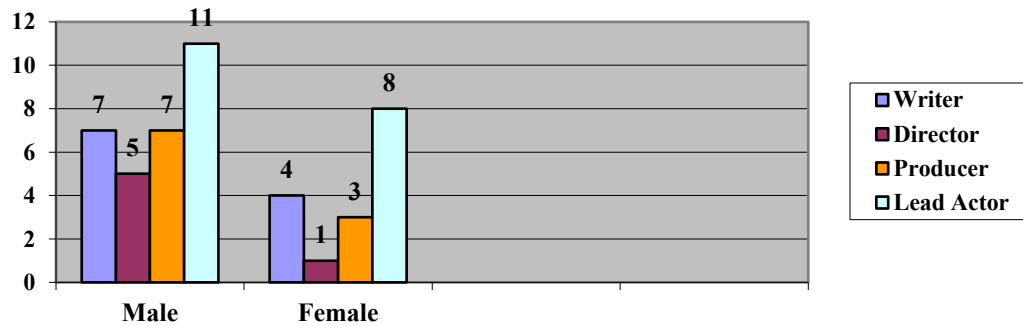
Women writers and producers are finally getting a spotlight as the gender gap is not drastic as compared to other categories. 4 women have writing credits with 7 male writers in these selected films; additionally, 3 women producers can be seen alongside 7 male film producers. In contrast, the state of women directors is in doldrums. We saw a single woman directorial credit in comparison to 5 men. She was behind one of the most successful Netflix Originals in 2025, KPop Demon Hunters, and a man co-directed with her (Table 1; Figure 1).

Women's representation

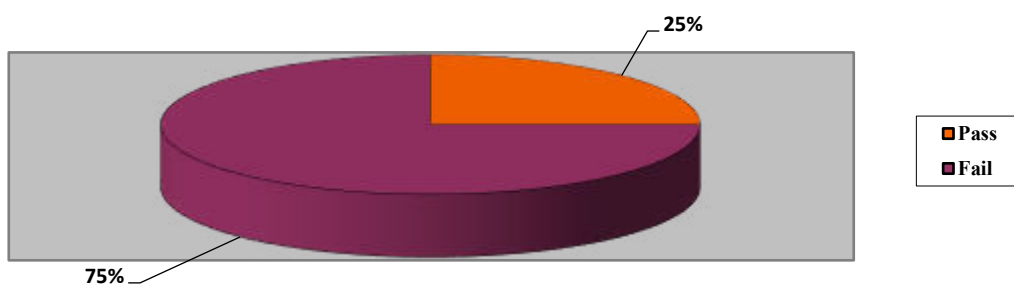
The overall results of the Bechdel Test show only 1 movie out of the 4 passed the test (25%), while 3 failed it. Interestingly, the movies included in our sample size are based on novels or from a variety of genres and it shows that women representation is limited in most cases, be it old novels or fresh stories. 4 women starred alongside 4 men in KPop Demon Hunters (fantasy/ musical) but women had more dialogues and screen time. The women were talking about their careers, goals, singing and a lot more. Only 1 woman featured as part of the main narrative in both Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl (comedy/ animation) and Frankenstein (horror/fantasy). In case of Frankenstein, the female character had her own thoughts and views, but she was used as a plot device to build upon the narrative. Train Dreams (period drama) featured 2 women alongside a man but it has a male-focused narrative, told by a man. Women have supportive roles and no interaction with each other. It is to be noted

Table 1: Gender gap in leadership positions & creative roles

S.No	Film Name	IMDb score	Writer		Director		Producer		Lead Actor	
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1.	Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl	7.5	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	1
2.	KPop Demon Hunters	7.5	1	3	1	1	0	1	4	4
3.	Frankenstein	7.5	1	1	1	0	3	0	3	1
4.	Train Dreams	7.6	3	0	1	0	3	2	2	2
Total			7	4	5	1	7	3	11	8

**Figure 1:** Ratio of male & female directors in top-rated Netflix Originals**Table 2:** Bechdel test

S.No.	Film Name	IMDb score	Bechdel Test			Result
			Two Female Characters	Female Conversation	Not About Men	
1.	Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl	7.5	Yes	No	No	Fail
2.	KPop Demon Hunters	7.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Pass
3.	Frankenstein	7.5	Yes	No	No	Fail
4.	Train Dreams	7.6	Yes	No	No	Fail

**Figure 2:** Results of the Bechdel test for top-rated Netflix Originals

that the film that passed the Bechdel Test and major involvement of women in its production (KPop Demon Hunters) has female protagonists (Table2; Figure 2).

Netflix and DEI policies

The official Netflix Report examined different inclusivity metrics including gender, race/ ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ+ in the platform's US-accredited film and series (2018-2023) concluded that 57.1% of films featured girls or women as leads or co-leads. Only 34.6% films had a gender-balanced story. 25% women directors dominate Netflix in 2023 as compared to 12% top grossing directors seen in the mainstream industry. Although percentage of women writers (46.6%) and producers (39.6%) have grown in the last few years, the path is not upwards but is constantly fluctuating.²⁸

In contrast, our analysis of Netflix Originals paints a different picture. Data clearly shows women appear significantly less as main leads in high-rated Netflix Originals; only KPop Demon Hunters featured 4 women in leading roles out of the 4 selected films. The state of women directors is abysmal, while female writers and producers are barely making the cut. Similarly, the women in lead roles are barely plot devices in most films rather than having their own story arcs. It can be said that Netflix may have introduced programs that encourage women participation on and off the screen, but women creators appear to be absent or neglected in its production policies.

Discussion

This study has shown that despite the pre-conceived notions about Netflix that it offers more diverse content with better gender representation, women continue to suffer as a minority in contemporary films on streaming platforms. The numbers highlight better prospects for women in some behind-the-scene roles, but there is still lack of opportunities for women to be equally visible on screen and in a better light. However, data in a report about Hollywood's top English-language films in 2021 released in theaters or major streaming platforms showed a promising picture as compared to where we stand today. The report stated women have gained enormous share in top film leads. Women accounted for 47.2% of film leads in 2021 which is nearly double the share (25.6%) that the report shared in 2011.⁷ This shows that male and female leads were getting equal opportunities in 2021 both in mainstream and OTT films.

However, our results in 2025 proved yet again that the equal on-screen gender representation has an instable graph. Data of top-rated Netflix Originals painted a grim picture with only 1 film out of 4 featuring women as lead actors and passing the Bechdel Test. Thus, solidifying that the progress for equality and equity is inconsistent, nonetheless, some efforts are visible in production and writing credits. Screenwriters are artists that weave multi-layered stories out of source materials. Unfortunately, women writers still struggle to get their voices heard in Hollywood films and streaming platforms.

A report highlighted that; women remain underrepresented in this key area. Women writers who got credits in top films increased to 33.5% in 2021. But even with this percentage, women would have to increase their count by nearly 20% to get closer to men in this employment position. It was also worth noticing that a women writer did not ensure a women director distinctively in 2021.⁴⁸ Another study also found that women fared best as producers (46%), then executive producers (36%), followed by writers (30%), creators (29%), editors (21%), directors (18%) and directors of photography (7%) working on streaming programs in 2022-23.¹ This is consistent with our findings that women producers and writers fare relatively well on streaming platforms but the growth needs to remain steady or move upwards in order to narrow down this very obvious gender gap.

The most neglected arena of all behind-the-scene roles is the directorial chair where women seem to be non-existent. The percentage of women directors in streaming shows is worsening with time. Only 2.2 out of 10 film directors are women.⁴⁸ Out of 112 directors who were responsible for the 100 top films of 2024, only 13.4% of those directors were women and 86.6% were men. This makes the gender ratio of male directors to female directors of 6.5 to 1.⁴

Reports have also proved that women directors have a tendency to have more inclusive and diverse cast in the film. More than half of the films directed by women in 2021 featured cast including more than 30% minority groups; and two thirds of the films by women directors in 2021 featured more than 40% female cast.⁴⁸ Therefore, there is more emphasis on having women in powerful positions to lead to more visibility for all genders, demographics,

and nuanced stories. Streaming platforms like Netflix came as an opportunity for the disadvantaged and unexplored, both in terms of content and creators. There are prospects for actors, directors, writers and producers. A newspaper article stated multiple case studies of shows that were rejected multiple times like *Stranger Things*, *Breaking Bad*, *Squid Game*, *Orange Is The New Black* and *The Queen's Gambit*, only to be picked by Netflix, that turned them into success stories.⁴⁹

But all this is not without caution as we don't know Netflix's motivations behind the rhetoric of diversity, equity and inclusivity. Since this study is exploratory and limited to a set of top-rated Netflix Originals, it may not confirm that the platform's larger gender-equality narrative is designed to reach a diverse audience to make more profits, or that the they genuinely believe in bringing about social change. However, it is worth mentioning that the business model, ownership dynamics and technical liberties are the key factors that decide how a platform will represent gender, which both feminist and political economy theories established.^{31,42} There is a likelihood that the dominant corporate platforms use the rhetoric of inclusivity and diversity to reduce the after-effects of practical reasons like funding sources and ownership that may influence the ideology and contents of the platforms. Additionally, feminist theory suggests that the type of stories we engage with can impact the way we view ourselves and our world.^{5, 31,50} Hence, Netflix needs to work on the quality of its Originals so that its roster of films qualifies in user/critic ratings, and present fresh and empowered narratives that differ from the mainstream

Although, this study was carried out with a large data (111 films), a very small sample of 4 films remained after filtering through IMDb scores. Popular films that do not fall under Netflix Originals category were excluded. Popular series and documentaries are not in the sample size. The sample includes only films with 7.5 or above IMDb ratings, so there is a chance that films with less gender gap or better women representation were missed due to their low rating. Niche films that were liked by a certain group due to their eccentric storylines may not be included.

There is a chance that IMDb ratings are biased as it relies on male opinions, Researchers noted that IMDb features more votes by male users

than by female users, and as compared to females, male users rated movies with lower scores.⁵¹ A study on films critics and gender highlighted that "men wrote the majority of reviews about films in every genre." and concluded that women critics score films with a woman protagonist higher than men and vice versa.¹

Bechdel Test is like a Litmus test rather than a comprehensive one, so it does not check the quality of the film. It shows if a film fulfills the basics of gender portrayal. One random conversation or even a derogatory line can help a film pass without addressing deeper issues of race, sexuality or agency.

Recommendations

Further research is recommended to investigate the reasons behind the gender disparity we have witnessed here. Next, it is advisable to conduct interviews of women in Netflix's production team and corporate structure to get an insight into the selection criteria behind scripts, cast, and creators behind the camera. Interviews of successful women filmmakers, writers and producers can also prove to be helpful in finding out women perspectives on why their gender is underrepresented or misrepresented on the screen even in the 21st century. In depth mixed method analysis including tests like the DuVernay Test, Sexy Lamp Test or Mako Mori Test will provide evidence on possible causes, its effect and what can be done to fix the gender imbalance and flat representations in the coming years.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have learned that Netflix Originals hardly manage to capture viewer's attention as they score average or low ratings on IMDb. The selected sample of Netflix Originals suggest continuing gender imbalance and limited female-centered misrepresentation.

We have listed some of the limitations that we faced due to selection criteria which also heavily depend on audience reviews, and testing mechanisms like Bechdel Test. The findings of our small sample size of top films reflects male dominance in off-screen positions; also noted that though women are making room as writers, directors and producers; female-led narratives are not

common. However, female protagonists are exceptions (1 out of 4 films), and 3 out of 4 of the films do not pass Bechdel Test – a recognized low baseline test for female representation in movies.

These results imply that Netflix is focusing more on algorithm-driven production model than creating art itself. This also highlighted a need to understand the barriers that hinder women's participation and offer solutions that tackle these blockages on policy level to ensure gender parity on and off screen.

Declarations

CRedit authorship contribution statement

SZ: Conceptualization; investigation; methodology; validation; visualization; writing original draft; writing review and editing; formal analysis; data curation.

MD: Conceptualization; investigation; methodology; validation; visualization; writing original draft; writing review and editing; formal analysis; data curation.

SMB: Investigation, methodology; validation; writing review, editing, and formal analysis data curation.

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Data availability

The data supporting this study findings, are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. No financial or non-financial relationships exist that could inappropriately influence the content of this manuscript.

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