

MAIN DIRECTIONS IN COVERAGE OF GENDER POLICY IN CITIZEN JOURNALISM IN THE USA AND WESTERN EUROPE

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Abstract: This article analyzes the main trends in gender policy coverage in citizen journalism in the USA and Western European countries, as well as the role of women's participation in the media space. It emphasizes that the development of digital technologies

has transformed citizen journalism into an active force in socio-political processes. The study provides a regional comparative analysis based on sources such as GMMP (2020), Mutsvairo and Wasserman (2016), and Gillmor (2004), demonstrating that women are less involved in political and technical topics. In the Uzbek context, although blogging and citizen journalism are developing, gender stereotypes and "passive images" of women persist in content (Gender stereotypes..., 2023). Additionally, drawing on international examples (IWMMF, 2018; OSCE, 2016; IPI, 2017), the issue of online harassment against women journalists is highlighted, along with its negative impact on their professional activities. In conclusion, citizen journalism is viewed not only as a means of disseminating information to women but also as a platform for ensuring social justice and gender equality.

Keywords: citizen journalism, gender equality, female bloggers, media policy, digital security, gender stereotypes

1. Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies and the Internet has fundamentally changed the processes of information consumption and distribution. In particular, citizen journalism plays an important role in the media landscape, allowing ordinary citizens to actively participate in creating, analyzing, and disseminating information (Gillmor, 2004). At the same time, the issue of gender equality remains relevant in citizen journalism, with problems related to the participation and representation of women and men in information processes on the agenda (Meyer, 2013). Global media monitoring – for example, the Global Media Monitoring Project (Who makes et al., 2020) – shows that women's participation in media content averages around 25-27% (Highlights et al., 2021). While these figures may be slightly higher in citizen journalism, they indicate that full gender balance has not yet been achieved.

In the USA and Europe, women authors account for up to 40-45% on citizen journalism platforms, while their share is much lower in technical and political areas. In Southeast Asia and Africa, women are more focused on social and family topics, with low levels of participation in political and economic subjects (Zeng et al., 2019; Mutsvairo & Wasserman, 2016). In the national context, although blogging and citizen journalism are developing rapidly in Uzbekistan, female bloggers mainly focus on family, psychology, education, and entrepreneurship, with relatively low participation

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.62499/ijmcc.vi11.132>

Citation:

Zakirova, Oisha. 2025.
MAIN DIRECTIONS IN
COVERAGE OF GENDER
POLICY IN CITIZEN
JOURNALISM IN THE USA
AND WESTERN EUROPE
International Journal of Media
and Communications in
Central Asia. 11: 20-33

in political, economic, and corruption-related subjects. Instances of gender stereotypes and the portrayal of women as passive subjects still occur in content (Gender stereotypes..., 2023). From a social constructivist perspective, images disseminated through the media shape society's views on gender; therefore, women's participation in citizen journalism also plays an important role in democratic processes and in shaping public opinion.

2. Literature review

Tajahuerce-Ángel and Padilla Castillo (2015) analyzed the state of gender policy in Spanish media, examining how sexism and inequality are perpetuated in journalistic language. They argue that “there are also media workers who lack gender awareness” and that editorial offices still do not sufficiently apply a gender-sensitive approach to language, information selection, and coverage. This work provides important additional theoretical insights into citizen journalism.

Hansen et al. (2025) focused on citizen journalism, the shortage of journalism in state capitols, and women's transformation through an analysis in one U.S. state. This represents a new approach to studying the scope and thematic directions of women's journalism, providing a foundation for a better understanding of gender issues in citizen journalism.

Other studies, such as Zeng et al. (2019), identified methodological limitations in research on women's topics on citizen journalism platforms in Southeast Asia and Africa. Mutsvairo and Wasserman (2016) noted that in African contexts, female bloggers have new opportunities through mobile journalism but are unable to participate sustainably due to a lack of infrastructure and resources. These studies support the values in your article and indicate similar trends in Uzbekistan.

Thus, reviewing the literature reveals that achieving gender equality in citizen journalism depends not only on the number of participants but also on thematic focus, language, and representation style, and institutional support.

3. Methods

The research methodology is based on comparative media analysis, content analysis, and social constructivism theory. The aim is to identify the main trends in gender policy coverage in citizen journalism, reveal the regional characteristics of women's participation, and analyze Uzbekistan's experience in an international context.

According to social constructivist theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), the media shape social reality. Therefore, citizen journalism is interpreted not only as a means of information transmission but

also as a social institution that shapes gender perspectives.

As an empirical basis, international reports from the Global Media Monitoring Project (2020), the United Nations Development Programme (2023), the European Institute for Gender Equality (2021), the International Women's Media Foundation (2018), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2016), the International Press Institute (2017), and the Investigative Journalism Education Consortium (2018) were analyzed. In addition, theoretical insights were drawn from the works of Gillmor (2004), Mutsvairo and Wasserman (2016), and Criado-Perez (2019). In the case of Uzbekistan, content from active female bloggers on Telegram, YouTube, and Facebook platforms was studied, revealing that 45% of topics were social, 25% psychological, 20% economic, and 10% political.

The research, conducted using descriptive, comparative, and discourse analysis methods, shows that women's participation is developing in line with international experience and lays the groundwork for studying gender sensitivity issues in citizen journalism in Uzbekistan at a new level.

4. Results and Discussion

The development of digital technologies and the Internet has dramatically changed the processes of information consumption and distribution. Citizen journalism – the active participation of ordinary citizens in creating, analyzing, and disseminating information – has become a significant force in the media landscape (Gillmor, 2004). Concurrently, gender equality remains a pressing issue in citizen journalism, with the participation and representation of women and men in information processes being on the agenda (Meyer, 2013). According to global media analysis reports, notably the Global Media Monitoring Project (Who makes..., 2020), women's participation in global media content

Table 1: Comparative snapshot

Region	Women's share (%)	Dominant topics	Challenges
USA / Europe	40–45	Social, cultural, political	Low participation in technical fields
Southeast Asia	30–35	Social, family	Lower presence in political-economic news
Africa	25–30	Local, legal, social	Resource and infrastructure deficits

Source: author's survey (Mutsvairo & Wasserman, 2016)

remains at about 25-27% (Highlights..., 2021). While this figure is slightly higher in citizen journalism, gender balance has not yet been achieved.

For instance, in the USA and Europe, on citizen journalism platforms (HuffPost Citizen, Global Voices), the proportion of female authors has reached 40-45%. However, this figure is lower for technical and political topics. In Southeast Asia, women write more on social and family topics but have lower participation rates in genres such as politics and economics (Zeng et al., 2019).

In Africa, mobile journalism has created significant opportunities for women, but the lack of infrastructure and resources remains a challenge (Mutsvairo & Wasserman, 2016).

At this point, we should cite an example from national experience. In recent years, blogging and citizen journalism have developed rapidly in Uzbekistan. The number of active female bloggers on platforms such as Telegram, YouTube, and Facebook is growing. However, content analysis shows that:

- Female bloggers mainly write about family, psychology, education, and entrepreneurship.
- The proportion of women covering political, economic, and corruption-related topics is relatively low.
- There are still instances of gender stereotypes and the portrayal of women as passive subjects in the content.

“One of the core drivers of the persistent gender gaps in Uzbekistan are gender-related stereotypes, harmful social norms and biased attitudes prevalent in society” (Gender..., 2023).

“Moreover, even the press of Central Asia, where previously, under the influence of traditions (the rule ‘do not take litter out of the house’) this topic was practically not paid attention, today it turned out to be involved in the general process” (Rasmukhamedova et al., 2024).

According to social constructivist theory, images disseminated through the media shape societal views of gender. International experience shows that women’s participation in citizen journalism is higher than in traditional media, but full equality in content topics and roles has not been achieved.

At the national level, to ensure gender equality:

- Encourage women to participate in political and economic topics actively;
- Implement gender-sensitive editorial policies in citizen journalism;
- Organize regular training courses and workshops.

In the USA, women first began participating in journalism during the colonial period, from the mid-18th century onward—mainly when their spouse, brother, or father was a publisher. By the end of the 19th century, educated middle-class women began

to view journalism as a meaningful profession. It was considered more “attractive” than teaching or nursing and was one of the few paid occupations open to women. More women gained access to journalism as publishers needed to attract female audiences for their advertisers, particularly department stores and consumer goods brands.

The popularity of women’s magazines demonstrated that women were desirable consumers for advertisers.

It was also necessary to hire women to create content for women; they wrote columns, articles, and pages in a “feminine style.” In the eighteenth, nineteenth, and first half of the twentieth century, most women’s magazines in the United States and Europe were actually published or edited by men. However, male journalists were less interested in writing about family life, fashion, beauty, household chores, or society news. They did not even consider writing poetry for women interesting. At that time, the concept of “gender-specific spheres” was still dominant; accordingly, important news

(“real news”) was considered relevant only to men’s interests and experiences.

Similarly, at the beginning of the 20th century, women also hosted popular service programs “aimed at housewives” in radio broadcasts.

However, only male voices were considered reliable, while female voices were rejected as “causing discomfort to the listener.” Thus, women entered public activities in a highly gendered manner, where men determined meanings and criteria, and women were given limited opportunities, such as writing about women and for women. Another path for female journalists to be hired was to cover social reform news. This was primarily related to the muckraker movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Some researchers argue that, in brief, journalism — primarily urban and social news — was shaped at the end of the 19th century concurrently with “women’s activism.” In some cases, women covered specific “family” topics: child labor, schools, public health, parks, the status of homeless people, and widows. These topics provided them with an opportunity to enter the field and led them to participate in societal activities. However, the perception that covering such topics was not considered “real” news persisted.

Despite women’s contributions to social reform journalism, these contributions were often denied. Definitions, descriptive concepts, and history itself were formed from the perspective of white, unmarried, middle-class men, whose intellect, voice, and experience were considered standard. This not only restricted women’s access to journalism but also undervalued their contribution to its development. Female journalists faced various



restrictions in their activities. For example, they were rarely allowed to cover political news, military reports, or crime chronicles. They were often directed towards “soft” news, domestic life, health, community affairs, and women’s topics. In journalism education, women were also excluded for a long time. Although journalism colleges and courses were opened as a result of public education reforms in the early 20th century, they imposed illegal or unofficial restrictions on women’s admission. Many editorial offices did not recognize journalism diplomas earned by women and still sought to limit them to “women’s topics.” Throughout the 20th century, the number of female journalists increased, and they began to participate more significantly in journalism.

During the First and Second World Wars, as men went to the front, many women took their places in editorial offices. This led women to cover topics including politics, economics, and even frontline news.

However, after the war ended, many women were again removed from their positions and forced to return to household work.

In the 1950s and 60s, the issue of gender equality again came to the forefront in the USA. This was related to feminist movements and civil rights movements. By the 1970s, women began to fight actively for their rights in journalism: claims for equal pay in editorial offices, promotion opportunities, and against “gender discrimination” increased.

In particular, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) – a law prohibiting discrimination based on gender, race, and other characteristics – served as a legal foundation for women in journalism. Women in some large editorial offices demanded their rights through collective claims. For example, in 1970, women at Newsweek magazine protested lower wages and restrictions on duties compared to men. Similar claims and pressures were observed in organizations such as the New York Times, the Associated Press, and the Washington Post. As a result, the number of women in editorial offices increased, their roles expanded, and women began writing on political and economic topics. However, this equality was not perfect – many women still faced obstacles to advancing to higher positions, and the “glass ceiling” remained. In addition, women from racial minorities (such as African Americans, Latinas, and others) faced even more obstacles.

By the 1990s, women began to participate more widely in the U.S. media system. Among them were editorial leaders, program producers, and hosts. At the same time, factors such as women’s appearance, voice, and age were still harshly evaluated in journalism and television. Over the years, technologies have evolved, and women have begun to emerge as independent voices

through the Internet, websites, and blogs. However, even on digital platforms, the risks of online harassment, discrimination, and the spread of false information have increased, creating new challenges for female journalists.

Since the 2000s, women have not only increased in numbers in journalism,

However, they have also begun to rise to leadership positions in editorial offices. At the same time, the overall state of the media industry has also changed: digital journalism, freelance formats, the influence of social networks, media commercialization, and audience pressure have increased. Women journalists often remained inadequately protected even in these processes.

Online threats and harassment on social media have intensified, especially against women writing on feminist or critical topics. Some had their personal information leaked, faced threats, or even were forced to quit their jobs. In journalistic practice, the approach typical of women – thoughtful, listening, empathetic, and context-based analysis – was sometimes undervalued. However, this style has often brought depth and humanity, especially to topics such as social problems, human rights, healthcare, and violence.

Studies show that female journalists are more likely to use female sources and tend to write about different ethnic groups, people with disabilities, or less visible communities. This is important in ensuring inclusivity and diverse perspectives in the news. However, at the same time, women receive less pay for their work or operate in more difficult environments in various ways. The glass ceiling – i.e., the invisible barrier – still exists: women perform various tasks in editorial offices but participate less in senior management and strategic decision-making. Even if a woman becomes a leader, she is expected to be an ideal leader, but is not given the patience and opportunities afforded to male leaders.

Therefore, many women struggle to secure the opportunity to “balance life and work,” an important step toward true equality in the media sphere.

Globally, the proportion of women in editorial offices and news agencies remains insufficient. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), only 24% of people featured in the news are women. That is, the majority of people speaking, analyzing, or appearing in the news are men. This indicates a strong gender imbalance among content creators, sources, analysts, and even subjects.

Various factors influence this:

- editorial culture,
- a one-sided approach to decision-making,
- problems in accessing women’s sources,

– and women’s caution about speaking publicly.

This situation is a serious obstacle to achieving gender equality.

In European countries, citizen journalism manifests as an important tool for developing democratic processes and strengthening public oversight. In particular, in Germany, France, and Great Britain, new trends are emerging in the media landscape through the participation of female bloggers and independent journalists in socio-political processes. Through their blogs, independent internet platforms, and social media activities, they not only disseminate information but also shape public opinion, influence political decision-making, and widely promote human rights and social justice.

The significance of female bloggers’ activities lies primarily in their opposition to prevailing gender stereotypes in the media. For example, in Germany, female bloggers are transforming citizen journalism into a practical mechanism of democracy by widely discussing issues such as transparency, social equality, and migration in political processes. In France, feminist media activists and bloggers are bringing women’s rights issues, workplace inequality, and the fight against violence to the forefront, prompting specific changes in state policy. The British experience can be cited as a concrete example. Journalist and activist Caroline Criado Perez (2019) generated significant public resonance by bringing the topic of gender equality to the broader public through her Twitter and blog activities. Her research and media campaigns revealed that information about women is often left “invisible,” and women’s experiences are not sufficiently considered in political, economic, and cultural decisions. As a result, representatives of government bodies in Britain were compelled to take a more serious approach to ensuring gender balance.

When we conducted a comparative analysis, we found that in Germany and France, the gender issue is considered more closely in conjunction with social policy, whereas in Great Britain, initiatives by citizen journalists and bloggers have provided greater impetus for public pressure and political reforms. Unlike in the USA, institutional support and state-level policies play an important role in ensuring gender balance in European countries (Annual..., 2021).

Thus, the experience of European countries shows that citizen journalism is becoming not only a means of disseminating information for women but also an effective social platform for expressing their positions, participating in political processes, and combating societal inequality. This process presents citizen journalism as an important international social institution in advancing gender equality and democracy (Papacharissi, 2014).

An Argentinian female journalist writes online under a pseudonym to avoid abuse. “I often receive threatening or disturbing phone calls, emails, and Twitter messages after I appear on air, usually as a political commentator. They can range from comments about my appearance to threats of rape or other sexual violence, as well as comments about my lack of intelligence,” said a female journalist from the USA (Argentina’s..., 2023).

Another journalist said, “For about five years, when I worked as a technology journalist at a magazine, I was constantly criticized on the Internet. Often, this was completely unrelated to the content of my articles. I was called a ‘whore’ because I wrote a negative article about Apple. People would find me on the Internet, search for defamatory information, and post it under my articles, often leaving humiliating or sexist jokes as comments.” These are just some of the responses from the 2014 International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) report on pressures against female journalists. As a result of a survey prepared for the report, two-thirds of participants reported experiencing intimidation, threats, or abuse because of their work (Violence..., 2018). Approximately one-quarter occurred online. According to Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, online harassment is a perilous threat to journalism in the 21st century, especially for women journalists. “Democracy thrives when more voices are heard on the Internet,” she said in the 2015 OSCE report (Addressing..., n.d.). While Mijatović acknowledges that male journalists can also face harassment, she noted that “the volume and content of violence, overt sexism, and expressions that disparage women are much more severe for female journalists.” As journalists detailed the threats they faced online, the newsletter issued a warning: “Trolls want to provoke a reaction. They choose words to offend the victim. They often engage in personal insults, use offensive language, incite hatred, threaten violence, and use sexual expressions. This malicious approach should distinguish the troll from a viewer who disagrees with your opinion but wants to be heard” (New Challenges..., 2016).

In 2017, the International Press Institute (IPI) reported “unprecedented” levels of online abuse faced by Finnish journalists (Journalists..., 2017). This report, based on a joint study by the Union of Journalists in Finland, Tampere University, and the Finnish Association of Investigative Journalism, revealed that one in four journalists had been subjected to verbal harassment and had faced insults or physical threats. The majority of those targeted were women, and the abuse was primarily connected to coverage of migration and refugee issues. The report also discussed the case of journalist Linda Pelkonen, who wrote an article about a 14-year-old girl allegedly raped by a man of migrant

background in Finland. Following publication, Pelkonen received rape and death threats via social media and email. Her personal phone number was later published on an anti-immigrant website, leading to a surge of threatening and abusive messages. Although she reported the threats to the police, the local prosecutor initially declined to press charges. Together with the Union of Journalists in Finland, she appealed to the prosecutor's office, warning that "failure to investigate such threats creates a dangerous precedent." Eventually, Finland's Attorney General agreed to reopen the case, and in May 2017, the Helsinki prosecutor's office filed charges against three men accused of participating in the online attacks (Journalists, 2017).

Mexico – a country ranked low in global press freedom indices and considered one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists – also faces a severe problem of online harassment against women journalists. In June 2017, The New York Times reported that the Mexican government had used spyware programs to monitor and harass journalists and activists (Ahmed & Perlroth, 2017). In Mexico, online abuse frequently escalates into physical violence. A striking example is the case of María del Rosario Fuentes Rubio, a member of the citizen-journalism network Valor por Tamaulipas ("Courage for Tamaulipas"), who reported on crimes and violence committed by drug cartels in the city of Reynosa, located on the U.S. – Mexico border. The city was engulfed in violent conflict between the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas, both of which sought to control what appeared in local media. Writing under the pseudonym Felina and using a "Mirror Woman" image as her avatar, Fuentes posted reports on Twitter. In response, cartel members distributed flyers across the city offering rewards for information about the administrator of her account. Her feed became flooded with threats and abuse. Despite these dangers, Fuentes continued publishing her reports. On October 16, 2014, she tweeted, "Today my life has come to an end." Shortly afterward, she was abducted and murdered by members of a local cartel (McGahan, 2014).

The harassment of journalists – particularly women – on the Internet poses numerous challenges. Online abuse represents a serious threat to women's participation in journalism. According to Elisa Lees Muñoz, Executive Director of the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), many women leave journalism and the media sector altogether due to gender-based, personal, and often violent digital harassment. "In many cases, media organizations lack policies or support systems to help journalists cope with such attacks," she stated. "Journalists feel unprotected, and as a result, they leave the profession" (New Challenges, 2016).

According to Muñoz, this situation exacerbates the global gender imbalance and further diminishes the representation of women in the news media. The departure of women from newsrooms leads to a loss of diversity in news coverage. As a result, the news agenda becomes shaped predominantly from the perspective of men – particularly white men. Muñoz emphasizes that such dynamics affecting women also apply to other minority groups within editorial offices. “This affects not only the news product itself but also the individuals involved,” she notes. Continuous attacks – targeting one's family and personal life – cause numerous psychological traumas, creating an environment of paranoia and depression in which individuals feel both under siege and isolated.

Women journalists face a double risk online compared to their male counterparts: first, threats related to their professional activities, and second, gender-directed threats. Insults of a sexual nature, threats of violence, and defamatory comments disproportionately target women journalists. These experiences hinder their professional work, compel self-censorship, and, in some cases, drive them to leave the profession altogether (Escalona, 2018).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, online threats and harassment against journalists – particularly women – are intensifying globally. This phenomenon threatens not only the personal safety of individuals but also the stability of freedom of expression and democracy itself.

To ensure the protection of journalists, comprehensive measures must be taken:

Legal reforms – Governments should classify online threats as criminal acts, establish appropriate penalties, and enforce them rigorously.

Editorial policies – Media organizations should develop clear rules and protocols to safeguard their employees.

Accountability of social media platforms – Companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram must take decisive action against hate speech and threat-based communication.

Digital security education – Journalists should be trained to protect their personal information and online accounts.

Public awareness – Society at large must understand that online harassment is not merely a personal issue for journalists but a global problem that affects the entire community.

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ОСНОВНЫЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ ОСВЕЩЕНИЯ ГЕНДЕРНОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ В ГРАЖДАНСКОЙ ЖУРНАЛИСТИКЕ ВЕДУЩИХ СТРАН США И ЗАПАДНОЙ ЕВРОПЫ

Аннотация: В статье анализируются основные направления освещения гендерной политики в гражданской журналистике США и стран Западной Европы, а также роль участия женщин в медиапространстве. Подчёркивается, что развитие цифровых технологий превратило гражданскую журналистику в активную силу общественно-политических процессов. В исследовании на основе источников GMMP (2020), Mutsvairo и Wasserman (2016), Gillmor (2004) представлен сравнительный региональный анализ, показывающий, что женщины реже принимают участие в освещении политических и технических тем. В опыте Узбекистана блогинг и гражданская журналистика динамично развиваются, однако в контенте женщин до сих пор встречаются гендерные стереотипы и «пассивные образы» (UNDP, 2023). Кроме того, на основе международных примеров (IWMF, 2018; OSCE, 2016; IPI, 2017) рассматривается проблема онлайн-преследований женщин-журналистов и их негативное влияние на профессиональную деятельность. В заключение подчёркивается, что гражданская журналистика рассматривается не только как средство передачи информации, но и как пространство для утверждения социальной справедливости и обеспечения гендерного равенства

Ключевые слова: гражданская журналистика, гендерное равенство, женщины-блогеры, медиаполитика, цифровая безопасность, гендерные стереотипы.

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AQSH VA G‘ARBIY YEVROPANING YETAKCHI DAVLATLARIDA
FUQAROLIK JURNALISTIKASIDA GENDER SIYOSATI
YORITILISHINING ASOSIY YO‘NALISHLARI

Annotatsiya: Maqolada AQSH va G‘arbiy Yevropa davlatlarida fuqarolik jurnalistikasida gender siyosati yoritilishining asosiy yo‘nalishlari hamda ayollar ishtirokining media makonidagi o‘rni tahlil qilinadi. Raqamli texnologiyalar rivoji fuqarolik jurnalistikasini ijtimoiy-siyosiy jarayonlarda faol kuchga aylantirgani ta’kidlanadi. Tadqiqotda GMMP (2020), Mutsvairo va Wasserman (2016), Gillmor (2004) kabi manbalar asosida mintaqaviy qiyosiy tahlil berilib, ayollar siyosiy va texnik mavzularda kamroq ishtirok etayotgani ko‘rsatiladi. O‘zbekiston tajribasida esa blogerlik va fuqarolik jurnalistikasi rivojlanayotgan bo‘lsa-da, ayollar kontentida gender stereotiplari va “passiv obrazlar” hanuz uchrab turadi (UNDP, 2023). Shuningdek, xalqaro misollar (IWMF, 2018; OSCE, 2016; IPI, 2017) asosida ayol jurnalistlarga nisbatan onlayn tazyiqlar muammosi yoritilib, ularning kasbiy faoliyatiga salbiy ta’siri ko‘rsatib o‘tiladi. Xulosa sifatida, fuqarolik jurnalistikasi ayollar uchun axborot uzatish vositasi bilan birga, ijtimoiy adolat va gender tengligini ta’minlash maydoni sifatida qaraladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: fuqarolik jurnalistikasi, gender tengligi, ayol blogerlar, media siyosati, raqamli xavfsizlik, gender stereotiplari

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