



**ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS
& PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA
BOOK SERIES**

PERCEPTIONS OF MEDIA AND GENDER REPRESENTATION IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Jammy Seigha GUANAH

To cite this article:

Jammy Seigha Guanah (2023), Perceptions Of Media And Gender Representation In A Multicultural Society in Communication, Media And Power Relations In A Multicultural Society: Context, Issues and Perspectives for Development ACSPN Book Series 8, pp. 118— 135

Retrieved from <http://www.acspn.com.ng>

(Institutional or Subscribed access may be required)

Please note that this is an electronic, pre-print version of this article published by the Evan Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Limited for Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN).

The ACSPN Book Series is exclusive to the Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria.

ISBN: **978-978-798-550-1**

Copyright © 2023

Editor and Contributors

Layout/Design: Ashroph De Grafico Ventures.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form or any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.



PERCEPTIONS OF MEDIA AND GENDER REPRESENTATION IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Jammy Seigha GUANAH



Introduction

The issue of gender bias against womenfolk is not new. It has always been there in our homes where the male child tends to be preferred above the female child; in our tertiary institutions where some courses are presumed to be for the male folk alone; in our workplaces where some positions are seen as the exclusive preserve of men, and in the larger society where most cultures are skewed against women. Narrating how some people are suffering from low expectations due to some traditional beliefs, like dancing when they have a male child, and not dancing when they have a female child, David Ibiyeomie said:

They believe a female is nothing in society. This system places high value on males than females, which is very wrong today. If you go to some families, some females are the ones financing everything. Most times, it is the females that take care of their parents when they get old because the men will be so busy with their wives and children. Let's abolish such practice because females are very vital in society (News

Hub Creator, 2022, p.1).

Ekwelie (2005) implicates the Judeo-Christian culture for treating women as second-class citizens who are constantly mocked, who can only be seen but not heard, and who are owned as property. According to Ekwelie (2005), the British Parliament issued a Witchcraft Act at one point, which stipulated punishment for women who seduced men into marriage by flaunting their God-given endowments but did not penalise the males who lustfully wedded the women. According to Sheck, Wylie, Watson, and Brar (2020), women are still viewed as second-class citizens in comparison to "first-class males" today as a result of various cultural norms.

Over the past century, campaigns against discrimination against women have received global attention, and various groups and organisations have risen to advocate for equality between men and women. Gender parity between them is so wide that World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021 revealed that it will take another generation of women to wait for gender parity. The World Economic Forum also estimates that it will take 145.5 years to attain gender parity in politics (World Economic Forum, 2021).

The media are intended to be battlegrounds for women's emancipation since it is the mass media that may emphasise and help to improve women's position. However, although the fight for gender parity continues, the media tend to do a disservice to gender equality campaigners. Discrimination has occurred in the media, both in reporting and employment, as well as in government positions. Depending on the agenda the media wanted to accomplish *abinitio*, which is sometimes established and pushed out, the media depiction of topics may have either a harmful or beneficial influence. As a result, media framing and representation may be defined as how the media highlights and emphasise certain concerns to influence how the public understands and interprets such issues. This is consistent with the stand of Iyengar and Kinder (as cited in Guanah & Obi, 2019) who posit that "by lavishing news coverage on an issue while ignoring others, the media draw attention to certain aspects of political life at the expense of the others" (p.114).

The way the media present a story affects our views in one way or another, and through this, the media use stereotypes to enable discrimination, hence, Malcolm X (as cited in Sheck, Wylie, Watson & Brar, 2020) warns that "If you are not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing" (p.2). Displaying a picture that highlights the ideology that men are somehow superior to women, Sheck, Wylie, Watson and Brar (2020) argue that when people view an image like that, it continues to sustain and further the gap of inequality between men and women.

The media have been faulted for subtly and overtly supporting discrimination against women, though there have been cases of such discrimination against men too, however, such cases are few. For example, Alexis Ohanian, the co-founder and executive chairman of the social news website *Reddit*, was referred to by the media as a tennis player, 'Serena Williams' husband' despite his achievements. He is an American Internet entrepreneur and investor. He also co-founded the early-stage venture capital firm Initialized Capital, helped launch the travel search website Hipmunk, and started the social enterprise *Breadpig*. He was also a partner at Y Combinator (Ikeji, 2021a).

The issue of media bias and discrimination against women seems to be more, like the case of the first woman and African to be elected as Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. She was cynically described by, at least three Swiss newspapers, *Luzerner Zeitung*, *Aargauer Zeitung* and *St. Galler Tagblatt*, as a 66-year-old Nigerian grandmother. The headline in *Aargauer Zeitung* newspaper on February 9, 2021, specifically read “This grandmother will become the boss of the WTO.” The fact that she graduated from Harvard University, or has a PhD from MIT, and rose to become the Managing Director of the World Bank which won the heart of 164 countries to be voted for as the WTO Director-General was left out of the report. Ajasa (2021) reports that *Aargauer Zeitung* newspaper had to tender an apology to the WTO Director-General after several women heads of UN agencies and more than 120 ambassadors in Geneva signed a petition calling out the headline as racist and sexist. While welcoming the apology in a tweet, Dr Okonjo-Iweala said she was “thankful to all my sisters, UN Women Leaders and the 124 Ambassadors in Geneva who signed the petition on calling out the racist & sexist remarks in this newspaper” (Ajasa, 2021, p.2).

Kamala Harris, the Vice President of the United States of America, has stated that her media portrayal would be different if she were a white male. According to a report from *The New York Times* (as cited in The Publishergr.com, 2021), Harris has been confiding in allies that she believes the news would cover her differently if she were white and male, attributing some of her negative press coverage to race and gender, particularly in conservative media outlets.

Gender discrimination in the media may be attributed to the macho newsroom culture as tenable in most media houses where men are the dominant staff. It may also be accredited to the fact that a smaller number of women practice journalism as against the ratio of the number of them that studied journalism in school. Shrum and Bischak (2001) maintain that there are fewer females than males in almost all forms of mainstream media, and those who do appear are often portrayed in very stereotypical ways.

To this end, it is important to investigate the current perception of stakeholders in the gender and media discourse. Here, this paper examined the extent media reports encourage general and gender stereotypes/discrimination; ascertained if the macho newsroom culture in journalism practice is the reason for biased reporting in the media against the female gender, and determined the factors that make a smaller number of women practice journalism.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of discrimination against women remains topical because the disparity between men and women tends not to be receding. The media are accused of abettal for not doing enough in conferring status on the stereotype against women discourse, and for not standing up, voicing concern, or providing adequate support for gender equality advocates. They are considered to be part of the problem instead of the solution. Hence Guanah (2017) accuses the mass media, which are supposed to accord all citizens equal rights and opportunities, of encouraging gender imbalance.

Although many studies have been conducted on gender discrimination, very few have attempted to examine, in-depth, the extent to which media reports encourage general and gender stereotypes, and the effects of macho newsroom culture as it relates to biased

reporting against the female gender in the media. It is this gaping that this study intended to fill.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. Examine the extent to which media reports encourage general and gender stereotypes/discrimination.
- ii. Ascertain if the macho-newsroom culture in journalism practice is the reason for biased media reports of females.
- iii. Determine the factors that make a smaller number of women practice journalism.

Theoretical Framework

The Critical Media Theory served as the foundation for this study. The development of Critical Theory at the Frankfurt School in the 1920s and 1930s by intellectuals and theoreticians including Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, and Max Horkheimer is connected to the history of this theory. The theories of György Lukács and Antonio Gramsci have also had an impact. According to Outhwaite (2009), the Frankfurt School researchers of the second generation, particularly Jürgen Habermas, have also had an impact. The critical theory advanced toward American pragmatism in Habermas' work, transcending its theoretical foundations in German idealism.

The two versions of critical theory started to overlap much more than they had before in the 1970s and 1980s when Habermas redefined critical social theory as a study of communication, with communicative competence and communicative rationality on the one hand, and distorted communication on the other. Horkheimer (as cited in George, 2008) emphasises that a theory is critical insofar as it seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (p. 567).

A critical theory is essentially any method of social philosophy that emphasises self-reflective analysis and critique of society and culture to expose and confront power structures. The premise of critical theory, which has roots in sociology and literary criticism, is that social issues are more often caused by social institutions and cultural presuppositions than by specific people. Ideology, according to Raymond (1981), is the main barrier to human liberty. Numerous academic disciplines, including psychoanalysis, sociology, history, communication theory, philosophy, and feminist theory, can benefit from the use of critical theory.

According to Glynn (2020), in general, neo-Marxist and Hegelian, the Frankfurt School's critical theory generated potent critiques of positivist, mainstream forms of social science and philosophy. Glynn (2020), opines that the Frankfurt School's theory of the emerging "mass media" of the 20th century served as a potent critique of the mainstream, positivist, "administrative" mass communication research that predominated in the field's early years.

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom developed varieties of structural and cultural Marxism that heavily drew on the work of Althusser and Gramsci in particular. As a result, there were some direct theoretical descendants of the Frankfurt School critical theory. Furthermore, the CCCS created semiotic and ethnographic approaches to critical media studies that drew from the

works of authors like Barthes and Geertz, leading to ideas of media audiences that were very different from those of the Frankfurt School and political economists.

In light of this, R. M. Seiler (as cited in Ucalgary, 2019), says that critical theory, a social theory, places the investigation into mass communication in the domain of ideology and explains the function of communication and the place of the media. According to Glynn (2020), the Birmingham School's critical media theory closely interacted with feminist theory and politics as well as critical race theory in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s and 1990s. It also engaged in dialogues and debates with poststructuralism, postmodernism, post-Marxism, and postcolonialism as it gained international traction under the looser umbrella of "Cultural Studies" (p.2).

Several important texts that outline different media-related thought processes are examined by critical media theory. They are crucial in the sense that they seek to define the boundaries of how current media operate and in highlighting the possibility for expanded uses of media (Google Search, 2015). This theory is used in this study because it criticises the media's complacent position in speaking out forcefully for the female gender when it comes to concerns of gender equity.

Salient Issues About Gender Inequality

Gender imbalance has long been a topic of discussion across the world. Guanah and Nwabueze (2021) point out that it is now being classified as a crime against women, although the demand for gender equality is frequently connected with equal access to education, excellent healthcare, equal employment, decision-making, and freedom for all sexes.

The discourse on women has assumed a central theme in global Treaties, Conventions and Declarations; even with that, women still face various systemic barriers and gender inequality. Many had hoped women would be more fairly treated, and the inequity gap between them and men reduced when Charters, such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights adopted in 1981; the ECOWAS Protocol, Democracy and Good Governance 2001; the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) adopted in July 2001; the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which obligates state parties to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, and Women and Children's Rights, as adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, and the 1995 World Conference that was held in Beijing, China, where over 46,000 women from all works of life from over 183 countries, including Nigeria, were represented, and where twelve critical areas of women's consensus were addressed. Fast forward to today, and a sense remains that the struggle for parity is still going on the world over. Despite the disappointments, women still hope that the gap will be bridged someday.

Gender discrimination, according to Rukhshanda, Muneera, and Waheed (2017), is the unjust treatment of women, as well as the denial of opportunities and violations of their rights. It is the uneven treatment of persons based on their qualities that distinguishes those causes that lead a person to discriminate, such as stereotypes, prejudice, and/or racism. Gender is influenced by culture, social interactions, and natural settings, according to Linda (2016), hence the twentieth century was defined by a worldwide trend toward gender equality/discrimination.

Gender inequality impacts the position of women in Africa, according to Ewrierhoma (2019), and one asks if the disparity is formed or a fiction based on changing conditions. Men and women are segregated by the dynamics of social interactions, access to resources, and decision-making, with the former held up as the norm and supported, while the latter is viewed as the outlier, the 'other,' or outsider. As a result, inequality denotes an unequal, inexact distribution or allocation of rights at various gender sites such as the family, education, labour, sexual orientations, and mental capacity.

When a woman is revealed to be resolute and understands what type of life she wants to live, society frequently plays the gender card. Guanah, Dalung and Anho (2018) state that the media have been criticised for remaining mute when it comes to proclaiming the huge gains women have made in society while blowing the men's trumpet. What is required of the media is that they portray news in such a manner that women's contributions to society are not perceived through the lens of gender, but rather as ordinary human endeavours.

Multifarious Biases Against Women

The female gender is faced with numerous types of discrimination, and one of the brazenly jingoistic attitudes and discrimination being perpetuated against women and the girl-child includes violence. Recently in the Aguleri Community of Anambra State, Nigeria, a woman was humiliated, stripped naked, and paraded naked around the community because she was alleged to have caused the death of her husband by sleeping with another man (MassMediaNG, 2022). The snag about the matter is that the male culprit who supposedly committed adultery with her was left off the hook. MassMediaNG (2022) reports that the video is posted online, and the community people said the woman should remain naked for the world to see. Women have their portion of the blame for being discriminated against, for instance, more women in the crowd paraded the naked woman. It is actions like these that made the Catholic Diocesan and Religious Directors of Social Communication, in a resolution declare that "Women are the worst victims of all violence and crises situations. They contribute so much to the economy but are not allowed to take charge" (Vanguard, 2017, p2).

There are numerous cases of discrimination against women in different spheres of life. For instance, it took 232 years and 115 prior appointments for Ketanji Brown Jackson, a black woman, to be selected to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States of America in 2022, making her place in history as the first Black female justice (Denean, 2022). In the recent past in Nigeria, a male National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member knelt with a ring to propose marriage to a female soldier (Private Sofiyat Akinlabi) at the NYSC orientation camp in Yikpata, Kwara State. Oyero (2021) reports that the visibly excited spinster, in military uniform, accepted the young graduate's proposal.

The Nigerian Army, on the other hand, detained the female officer. Sofiyat Akinlabi's offences, according to the Army authority's spokesman, Brig. Gen. Onyema Nwachukwu was fraternisation while on official duty at the NYSC camp; that is, engaging in an intimate relationship with a trainee. She was also ineligible for marriage because she had not served in the Army for at least three years; she disobeyed the Armed Forces of Nigeria's standing guidelines and directives for the use of social media; she engaged in romantic relationships while in uniform; and her behaviour was detrimental to good order and military discipline (Daily Trust, 2021).

However, both the NYSC member and the soldier are over the age of 18, which makes them eligible for marriage under Nigerian law; also, there is a clear distinction between accepting a marriage proposal and marrying. To demonstrate that detaining the female officer was gender discrimination, several Facebook users dug up and shared photos of male soldiers who engaged in romance and proposed to their girlfriends while wearing their uniforms, and they were not penalised for doing so as seen in the case of the female soldier (Ikeji, 2021b).

In response to the imprisonment of the female soldier, Rhoda Tyoden, the immediate past president of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), declares that army rules could not trump the Nigerian constitution. She goes on to say that the regulation prohibiting female soldiers from marrying while serving for less than three years is discriminatory and hence illegal because it does not apply to male personnel. Tyoden emphasises that “if the fear of her becoming pregnant has anything detrimental to her service in the military, then what about the officer who impregnates her? Let the rule be generic that nobody engages in this or that” (Daily Trust, 2021, p.2).

Similarly, MassMediaNG (2021a) reports the case of another female soldier who accepted the proposal of a shoemaker and was punished by her fellow soldiers who dragged her in the mud till she could not breathe. The soldiers felt it was humiliating for her to accept the proposal of a “common floor guy.” Even in the transportation industry in Nigeria, where women are attempting to make a career, they face prejudice. Under the umbrella of the Ladies on Wheel Association of Nigeria (LOWAN), a group of Nigerian female commercial drivers, the majority of whom are university graduates in various fields, have accused Nigerians of subjecting them to unfair treatment, including discrimination, humiliation, and harassment.

Apart from branding them as sex workers, the women claim that many of their clients try to take advantage of them by pursuing amoral encounters. Nkechi Abiola, the president and founder of LOWAN, notes that many of her members are subjected to abuse from their families, their surroundings, and society as a whole. A woman driver was once assaulted by a guy inside her vehicle. According to Abiola, discrimination extends to an unwillingness to patronise them, as many requested trips are cancelled regularly once the rider realises that the driver is a woman (Kanabe, 2021).

Another clear case of open discrimination against the female gender was displayed in Nigeria’s 8th Senate where Senator Biodun Olujimi was forced to step down her bill calling for gender equality. The bill, entitled “A bill for an Act to make provisions for the empowerment of women and gender equality and to establish a legislative framework for the empowerment of women”, according to Senator Olujimi, was designed to align all aspects and implementation of laws relating to women empowerment as well as address issues relating to appointments and representation of women in decision making, positions and structures. According to Umoru (2021), during the second reading of the bill on the floor of the House, a heated debate ensued, and the sponsor was forced to withdraw it after some senators who kicked against it, cited “socio-cultural and Islamic concerns.” The bill, which was first brought to the Senate during the 7th Assembly, had earlier been killed by the 7th Senate.

The ongoing 9th Assembly recently rejected the affirmative action bills to create special seats for women in the legislative and executive arms of government at federal and state levels, and other gender-related bills in the National Assembly (NASS). Sponsored by Senator Nkeiru Onyejeocha, the bill sought 111 extra seats in the National Assembly for women – one Senate and two House of Representatives seats from each state and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). It also aimed at obtaining 108 seats in state assemblies for women. The Affirmative Action Bill, on the other hand, sought 35 per cent of political party positions for women.

According to Vanguard (2022), if the bills had passed, Nigerian women would have gained significantly more visibility in all facets of politics and administration as a result of constitutional empowerment. Nigeria would have finally met its duties under the worldwide conventions for the eradication of gender discrimination, to which it is a signatory. Nigerian women consider NASS' action to be a loud and clear statement that "they do not want progress for society: for mothers, aunties, sisters, wives, and daughters" (Nnamdi, 2022, p.2). In her statement, the minister of women's affairs, Pauline Tallen, said Nigerian women were disappointed and aggrieved at the actions of the 9th National Assembly (NASS) which denied women the opportunity of inclusion and representation in governance by voting against the gender bills.

While calling on NASS to reconsider their decision on the rejected gender bills, another set of aggrieved women, under the aegis of Women of Nigeria, asked the National Assembly to note that the National Assembly has taken the women backwards because, "their actions undermine the importance and relevance of women's contribution to the governance of Nigeria including the key role women play to bring victory to political parties in elections at all levels across the country" (Edeme, 2022, p.1).

However, the fact remains that women do antagonise themselves when they are expected to work together to achieve gender equality. This was the case of the deputy minister for women, family, and community development, of Malaysia, Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff. She advised husbands to 'discipline' their 'stubborn' wives by speaking to them, but if they refuse to change their behaviour, then they should sleep apart from them for three days, and if after that the woman refuses to change, they can gently hit her to show his strictness and how much he wants her to change (Yabaleftonline, 2022). Also, members of the Ladies on Wheel Association of Nigeria (LOWAN) complain about women passengers giving them more problems. These female passengers see them as wayward drivers who are only out to attract men. Nonetheless, Cable News Network (CNN) International Anchor, Zain Asher said it is important for women who are in positions of power to use their influences to uplift other women rather than engaging in unnecessary rivalry (Ajayi, 2022).

Media and Gender Equity Promotion

The media are saddled with enormous responsibilities because of the power in their possession, hence they can easily turn the tides of any situation with their reportage through framing. They can supply critical knowledge to educate the public about gender issues, and to modify negative attitudes and behaviours toward women in particular. They may be useful, efficient, and a fantastic teaching tool for providing a visual understanding of more complex subjects as well as portraying processes that can be utilised to spread gender awareness. If the media are unavoidable in society, then their good roles must be consistent with the occurrence of unpleasant events as well; as a result, they should

always expose discrimination against women and girls.

According to Guanah, Dalung, and Anho (2018), the mass media serve as a bridge not just in ensuring that prejudice against women is decreased, if not eliminated, but also in portraying women as capable of handling any task thrown at them. The media are change agents, and they are extremely effective at entertaining, educating, and informing the public on important issues. Instead of a tinge of gender prejudice in some media coverage, the media should be perceived as promoting equality in society. The media must rise to the occasion and try to close the gap between men and women.

Women's rights to security and safety, as well as their right to dignity and freedom from humiliating treatment by society, are all protected by the media. Through their reporting, they must not advocate, normalise, or perpetuate views and behaviours that are anti-gender equality, as this will exacerbate and jeopardise the agitation for gender equity in society. The media should make conscious attempts to balance gender representation in their news articles and reports.

Today, the media should play a stronger role in levelling up the disparity between men and women and putting an end to the second-class status of the female gender being embroiled. If they are silent, doing nothing to liberate women from the enormous discrimination they are exposed to, it invariably means the media are accomplices in the silencing of the women's agenda that society has consciously and unconsciously embarked on. Their job is not to stereotype. Their assignment is to promote the virtues of the female gender and publicise their innate ability to function and multitask satisfactorily. They are meant to propagate "what a man can do, a woman can also do, if not better than the man if given equal opportunity."

Methodology

A survey design was adopted, and a questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The population of the study is made of all the teaching and non-teaching staff of the Departments of Mass Communication and Music (Theatre Arts) of the University of Benin (UNIBEN), Benin City; Delta State University (DELSU), Abraka, and University of Africa (UAT), Toru-Orua. The justification for the population was purposive due to the knowledge of the sets in the population.

According to Ayakoroma (2020), and data obtained from the schools (Schools' Registries), the various staff strength of these universities is the Department of Music (DELSU) = 14, Department of Mass Communication (DELSU) = 26; UNIBEN's Department of Mass Communication = 38, UNIBEN's Department of Theatre Arts (where Music is domiciled) = 45; UAT's Department of Mass Communication = 16, and UAT's Department of Theatre Arts (where Music is domiciled) = 14. This gives the population 153. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table was used to determine the Sample. The table indicates that when a given population is between 150 and 159, the corresponding sample size will be 108. Proportionate Allocation Formula was used to ascertain the sample size to pick from each University thus:

DELSU: $\frac{40 \times 108}{153} = 28.24$ Approximately = 28
 UNIBEN: $\frac{83 \times 108}{153} = 58.59$ Approximately = 59
 UAT: $\frac{30 \times 108}{153} = 21.18$ Approximately = 21
 Total: = 108

A simple random sampling technique was used to select the individuals from each school who were administered the questionnaire.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: The extent to which media reports encourage gender stereotypes/discrimination

Responses	Frequency	%
Very High Extent	27	25
High Extent	31	28.70
Undecided	2	1.85
Low Extent	23	21.30
Very Low Extent	25	23.15
Total	108	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

KEYS: Very High Extent- 90% - 100%; High Extent- 89% - 70%; Undecided- 50% - 69%; Low Extent- 40% - 49%; Very Low Extent- 1% - 39%.

The data in Table 1 above implies that the media, in one way or the other, contribute to gender discrimination being perpetuated against the girl-child and women in society.

Table 2: Macho newsroom culture in journalism practice as the reason for biased media reports of female

Responses	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	26	24.07
Agree	27	25
Undecided	3	2.79
Disagree	26	24.07
Strongly Disagree	26	24.07
Total	108	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Likert - type five points rating scale and dichotomous were used: 5= Strongly Agree (SA), 4=Agree (A), 3= Undecided (U), 2= Strongly Disagree (SD), and 1= Disagree (D) responses as well as open-ended questions.

From Table 2, it can be deduced that there is no clear agreement as to whether the dominance of the newsroom by the male gender is a factor in biased reporting against the female gender in the media.

Table 3: Why a smaller number of women are in journalism practice

Factors	Frequency	%
Culture:	16	14.81
Marriage	12	11.11
Macho Newsroom Culture	7	6.48
Nature of Work	10	9.26
Religion	5	4.63
Stereotype	11	10.19
Career Prospect	10	9.26
Interest	9	8.33
Laziness	7	6.48
Poor Remuneration	6	5.56
Health issue	6	5.56
Internal Politics	9	8.33
Total	108	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 3 shows that numerous reasons account for why there are fewer women than men practising journalism even when research has revealed that more women than men study journalism as a course in tertiary institutions.

The first finding shows that the media partially accentuate stereotypes and discrimination against the female gender in society. This finding reverberates with the postulations of Sheck, Wylie, Watson and Brar(2020), that based on facts, images and research, a conclusion can be drawn supporting the argument that the media does encourage and allow stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.

The discrimination and marginalisation of the female gender have become a steady drumbeat across the world. The pushback has to be now, and it should be well coordinated. The media should be at the forefront of safeguarding the dignity of the girl-child and women, and not the contrary. They are to strengthen the position of women as equal entities with their male counterparts.

The media needs to do their parts in ensuring that the present dichotomy that exists between the male and female genders is completely removed. If they do not wield their power of persuasion, agenda-setting, status conferral, and framing to fight against the discrimination that women are experiencing, then, they cannot be adjudged to be performing to full capacity their expected roles in society, which includes bringing about equity among all citizens, no matter their sex.

Ekwelie (2005) emphasises that the media can help in fighting gender discrimination, redeeming the image of women, correcting the wrong portrayal of women in the newspapers, magazines, and other publications, and ensuring there is gender equality and mutual respect for women. He points out that these can be done through the use of language, pictures, cartoons, and all other illustrations. Through the mass media, all will begin to come to terms with society as it is, and not as ordered by those who have hatred for women.

Findings also show that it is not true that the macho newsroom culture in journalism practice is the reason for biased reporting in the media against the female gender despite the belief by some people that the chauvinistic toxin tends to have found its way into the newsroom. MassMediaNG (2021b) refers to macho newsroom culture as male domination of the journalism profession which also reflects on daily newsroom activities. It is explained as an atmosphere of work which makes one feel that the job is mainly for men. This situation made Djerf-Pierre (2007) declare that women are being denied an equal place at the reporters' table.

Ross and Carter (2001) write that feminist news researchers have long argued that in the macho culture of most newsrooms, journalists' daily descriptions of what is newsworthy remain firmly based on masculine news values. Cable News Network (CNN) International anchor, Zain Asher, asserts, "With women and their numbers in the media, I think that having low representation is not good" (Ajayi, 2022, p.1).

Discrimination against women is said to exist in newsrooms because men who are enraged by women's "invasion" of some media newsrooms are quoted by Steiner (2009) to have said that, "Newsworld would defeminize and even desex women" (p.116). Roy Greenslade wonders how the profession could remain so male-dominated when the classes he was teaching were increasingly full of young women (Allan, as cited in Ibrahim, 2020).

The under-reporting and biased reporting against women in Nigeria by the mass media may be a result of the overwhelming presence of male journalists in news media organisations. This makes their perspectives in the reporting to be more prevalent than those of the few women journalists and also gives them the leeway and liberty to be biased if they choose to. Stuart Allan, while writing on Journalism and the Culture of Othering, says this about how macho newsroom culture influences women in journalism practice:

There is no disputing the fact that macho newsroom culture is a predominant feature in the journalism industry across the world. It could also be a discouraging factor for women's enrolment in journalism practice. This is why media managers and stakeholders need to do more to work against gender disparity or practices that could encourage it in the workplace environment in the media sector (MassMediaNG, 2021b, p.2).

Polly Curtis, editor-in-chief, of HuffPost, one of the leading online news websites in the United States of America, once said in an interview, "I have experienced extremely male-dominated cultures in journalism that I found very difficult at times. I also had long stretches of my career when it just wasn't an issue. At its worst, I've seen how off-putting that macho culture can be for younger women coming into newsrooms" (MassMediaNG, 2021c, p. 3).

Findings further show that a lot of factors are responsible for why there is less number of women practising journalism. The reasons for this may differ slightly among countries due to socio-cultural and other environmental factors, but the general factors include Culture, Marriage, Religion, Career Prospects, Macho Newsroom, Interest, Laziness, Nature of Work, Stereotypes, Poor Remuneration, Health Issues, and Internal Politics.

According to MassMediaNG (2021c), women in Nigeria and most African countries are limited to being housekeepers, remaining with the children, and taking care of domestic issues. Even if a woman has a paying career, she must find a way to integrate it with housekeeping responsibilities. Since journalism is a job that requires long hours, a woman, especially one who is married, may not be able to handle it. With the eyes of African culture, a woman who exhibits the act of fearlessness that journalism bestows on its practitioners will be viewed as a wild woman. As a result, journalism is not a preferred profession for women in many regions, particularly in Africa, due to cultural differences.

Some women become so consumed with the needs of the 'home front' after they get married that they have little time for active journalism practice. They become preoccupied with caring for the family, racing about the house watching the kids, and attending to their husbands. For instance, Palser, Lazerwitz, and Fotopoulou (2022) cite one editor-in-chief who stated that he spent months recruiting his editing team before taking on the post of editor-in-chief. He said he lost track of the number of invites he sent out to ladies who declined due to scheduling constraints. Given the number of responsibilities, several of the women stated that taking on such a demanding role would not be suitable.

Other factors cited by MassMediaNG (2021c) that contribute to a lower number of women practising journalism include religion, stereotypes, and career prospects, where men dominate managerial positions in the media, making women feel hopeless in their efforts to reach the top; interest, where more female communication graduates prefer to work in public relations and advertising rather than journalism; and laziness, where some women do not want "skin pain." Journalism is demanding, time-consuming, and risky. Not everyone, including men, wants to be under such duress for a salary that is way below par.

The means of solving the problems associated with gender reporting are attainable. Since more scholars claim that fewer female journalists are responsible for the underrepresentation of women in news coverage, Nwabueze (2013) believes that removing all bottlenecks that prevent women from becoming journalists will ensure balanced coverage of both the male and female gender by the media in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Gender parity can be made a strategic objective for every segment of society, and women can be supported to participate fully in governance and decision-making without any form of encumbrance placed before them. All forms of gender discrimination against women can be eliminated, and gender-neutral flexible career paths be promoted in Nigeria. It is the duty of the media to continue to show genuine commitment in the fight against all forms of marginalisation against women and portray equality between men and women in all spheres of life. The ideal thing is that the mass media should be a partner in progress with women by being a voice for them at all times, and in all situations instead of being women's bane and pain.

As a means to deconstruct the macho-room culture, and encourage more women to practice journalism, media organisations are at liberty to initiate and promote more gender-friendly work plans and editorial policies in their organisations to entice women to pick up journalism jobs and participate in the agitation for gender equity. Women can also bring to bear on their journalism career the training that the home provides, especially those whose beats focus on the home and women's activities. This will present them, journalists, with

double portfolios, that is marriage and media.

On their part, women must ensure that the struggle for gender equality continues. They should capitalise on the availability of social media to change the narratives against them. For instance, they should lead in publishing the cheering news emanating from Afghanistan that the Taliban has issued a decree barring forced marriage, saying women should not be considered “property” and must consent to the marriage (Louis, 2021). Women can build up their power base in the fight against all forms of discrimination against them.

Everybody must work towards ensuring the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls by allowing them to advance and unleash their limitless potential because this will aid the objective of sustainable development goals.

Recommendations

1. Since the media are powerful influencers of man`s decision-making faculty, they should always display balance while reporting gender issues. They must deliberately democratise news narratives to extricate all forms of gender discrimination from them for women to have equal voices too.
2. The media should encourage women advocacy groups, and adequately sensitise the woman on the street to join the vanguard for gender equality.
3. More women should venture into the practice of journalism, and ascend the management cadre to ensure gender issues are given prominence.
4. Gender quotas should also be given in newsrooms that could disintegrate the macho-news room culture.

References

- Ajasa, F. (2021). Swiss newspaper apologises to Okonjo-Iweala for labelling her 'grandmother.' Retrieved from <https://thenewsguru.com/nigeria-news/swiss-newspaper-apologises-to-okonjo-iweala-for-labelling-her-grandmother/>.
- Ajayi, O. (2022). Do you know that CNN's Zain Asher, is an Igbo woman? Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/03/do-you-know-that-cnns-zain-asher-is-an-igbo-woman/>.
- Ayakoroma, B. F. (2020). Survey on theatre arts students in Nigerian universities: 2020/2021 Academic Session. Being an Annexure to a submission: Repositioning University of Africa Toru-Orua (UAT) for Improved Visibility.
- Daily Trust (2021). Female soldiers, others seek review of 'discriminatory' law. Retrieved from http://opr.news/2f8ae149211226en_ng?link=1&client=news
- Denean, A. (2022). 'It has taken 232 years': Jackson speaks at White House following historic confirmation. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/katv.com/amp/news/nation-world/it-has-taken-232-years-jackson-speaks-at-white-house-following-historic-confirmation-ketanji-brown-jackson-supreme-court-scotus-senate-hearing-president-joe-biden-kamala-harris-justice-jackson-black-woman-bench>.
- Djerf-Pierre, M. (2007). Gender of journalism: The structure and logic of the field in the twentieth century. *Nordicom Review*, Jubilee Issue, 81-104.
- Edeme, V. (2022). Women group seeks reconsideration of gender bill. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/women-group-seeks-reconsideration-of-gender-bill/>.
- Ekwelie, S. A. (2005). *A master style guide*. Lagos: John Letterman Limited Publications.
- Evwierhoma, M. I. E. (2019). Gender Equality in Africa: Broad and Cross-National Perspectives. In: O. Okome, I. Uwah & F. Nwafor (Eds.), *Nollywood nation (On the industry, practice and scholarship of cinema in Nigeria): A festschrift in honour of Professor Femi Okiremuette Shaka*. (pp. 677-689). Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press Ltd.
- George, R. (2008). *Sociological Theory, From Modern to Postmodern Social Theory (and Beyond)*. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Glynn, K. (2020). Critical Media Theory, Cinema and Media Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencegate.app/document/10.1093/obo/9780199791286-0333ScienceGate>.
- Google Search (2015). Showing results for what is critical media theory? Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/search?Q=what+is+critical+media+theory%3F&oq=what+is+critical+media+theory%3F&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i22i30j0i390i3.28131j1j7&client=ms-android-transsion-infinix-rev1&sourceid=chrome-mobile&ie=UTF-8#ip=1>.
- Guanah, J. S. & Nwabueze, C. (2021). Gender imbalance in political reporting in Nigeria: A critical appraisal. *Ebonyi State University Journal of Mass Communication*, 8 (1): 71-85.
- Guanah, J. S. & Obi, I. (2019). Cybercrime as a security ambivalence of the digital media: The framing of *Yahoo-Yahoo Business* (YYB) stories by Nigerian newspapers. Paper presented at the 21st International Conference/Annual General Meeting (AGM) of African Council for

- Communication Education (ACCE), held at National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Jabi Campus, Abuja, Nigeria, from October 22nd - October 25th.
- Guanah, J. S. Dalung, R. & Anho, E. J. (2018). Coverage of the contributions of women to Nigerian economy: Analysis of *Vanguard, Punch, Guardian* newspapers. *International Journal of Integrative Humanism Ghana*, 10 (1): 134-148. Available at https://books.google.com/books/about/INTERNATIONAL_JOURNAL_OF_INTEGRATIVE_HUM.html?id=i0qFDwAAQBAJ.
- Guanah, J. S. (2017). Comparative study of Nigerian press coverage of male and female aspirants in the 2013 gubernatorial election in Anambra State. *UniUyo Journal of Communication Studies*, 1(1):126- 140. Available at <http://www.commartsuniuyo.com/index.php/blog/>.
- Ibrahim, M. (2020). Status and Representation of Women in Public and Private Broadcast Media in Kaduna and Kano, Nigeria. *SAU Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 5(2):162-170.
- Ikeji, L. (2021a). Reddit co-founder, Alexis Ohanian reacts to being described as tennis player, 'Serena Williams' husband' despite his personal achievements. Retrieved from <https://www.lindaikejisblog.com/2021/4/reddit-co-founder-alexis-ohanian-reacts-to-being-described-as-tennis-player-serena-williams-husband-despite-his-personal-achievements.html>.
- Ikeji, L. (2021b). Nigerians dig up photos of male soldiers who proposed while in uniform and weren't detained after female soldier was detained for accepting proposal from corps member. Retrieved from <https://www.lindaikejisblog.com/2021/12/nigerians-dig-up-photos-of-male-soldiers-who-proposed-while-in-uniform-and-werent-detained-after-female-soldier-was-detained-for-accepting-proposal-from-corps-member.html>.
- Kanabe, M. (2021). Nigerian female commercial drivers lament discrimination, abuse. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/502320-nigerian-female-commercial-drivers-lament-discrimination-abuse.html>.
- Krejcie, R. V. & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30: 607-610.
- Linda, K. (2016). Gender Inequality, Female Leadership and Aid Allocation. Retrieved from [www/onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jid.3208](http://www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jid.3208).
- Louis, F. (2021). Taliban has issued a decree barring forced marriage in Afghanistan, saying women should not be considered "property" and must consent to marriage. Retrieved from <https://www.gbetutv.com/taliban-has-issued-a-decree-barring-forced-marriage-in-afghanistan-saying-women-should-not-be-considered-property-and-must-consent-to-marriage/>.
- MassMediaNG (2022). Watch! Woman humiliated, stripped naked after being accused of killing her husband by sleeping with another man (video). Retrieved from <https://massmediang.com/watch-as-two-deadly-wild-animals-fight-over-territory-in-hair-raising-video/>.
- MassMediaNG (2021a). (Watch Video): See how female soldier who accepted marriage proposal was dragged to the mud till she lost her breath. Retrieved from <https://massmediang.com/watch-video-see-how-female-soldier-who-accepted-marriage-proposal-was-dragged-to-the-mud-till-she-lost-her-breath/>.

- MassMediaNG (2021b). What is Macho Newsroom Culture in Journalism Practice? Retrieved from <https://massmediang.com/what-is-macho-newsroom-culture-in-journalism-practice/>.
- MassMediaNG (2021c). Top 10 Reasons Why Women Don't Like Practicing Journalism. Retrieved from <https://massmediang.com/top-10-reasons-why-women-dont-like-practicing-journalism/>.
- News Hub Creator (2022). Pastor David Ibiyeomie Names A Traditional Belief System That Should Be Abolished [Video]. Retrieved from http://opr.news/sfcd947c220408en_ng?link=1&client=news.
- Nnamdi, O. (2022). Buhari's Minister Slams Male Lawmakers Who Voted Against Women's Bill, Speaks On Next Line Of Action. Retrieved from <https://www.legit.ng/nigeria/1458366-male-lawmakers-against-gender-bills-have-no-respect-for-women-minister/Legit.ng>.
- Nwabueze, C. (2013). Is journalism a man`s job or a job for many men? Local culture and under-representation of female journalists in Nigeria. In: C. Nwabueze & N. Idiong (Eds) *Politics, culture and the media in Nigeria*. (pp. 235-250). Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd.
- Outhwaite, W. (2009). *Habermas: A Critical Introduction (Key Contemporary Thinkers- 2nd Ed.* New York: Polity.
- Oyero, K. (2021). Detained female soldier will be penalised for accepting corper's proposal Army. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/detained-female-soldier-will-be-penalised-for-accepting-corpers-proposal-army/>.
- Palser, R. E., Lazerwitz, M. & Fotopoulou, A. (2022). Gender and geographical disparity in editorial boards of journals in psychology and neuroscience. Retrieved from <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41593-022-01012-w>.
- Raymond, G. (1981). *The Idea of a Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, K. & Carter, C. (2001). Women and news: A long and winding road. *Media, Culture and Society*, 33(8): 1148-1165.
- Rukhshanda, Z., Muneera, M. B. & Waheed, A. K. (2017). Causes and Consequences of Gender Discrimination against Women in Quetta City. *Arts and Social Science Journal*, 8 (3): 65-77.
- Sheck, C., Wylie, F., Watson, A., Brar, P. (2020). Stereotypes within the Media. Retrieved from <https://www.sutori.com/story/stereotypes-within-the-media-hvfrSZPU8Ksjzgy6ZERRqSAq>.
- Shrum, L. J. & Bischak, V. D. (2001). Mainstreaming, resonance and impersonal impact: Testing moderators of the cultivation effects for estimates of crime risk. *Human Communications Research*, 27, 187-215.
- Steiner, L. (2009). Gender in the newsroom. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds) *The handbook of journalism studies*. (pp. 116-129). New York: Routledge.
- The Publisherngr.com (2021). Harris told allies that the media coverage of her would be different if she were a white man. Retrieved from http://opr.news/2f8ae149211226en_ng?link=1&client=news.
- Ucalgary (2019). Media Studies, Critical Theory, and Cultural Studies. Retrieved from <https://people.ucalgary.ca/hardt>.

- Umoru, H. (2021). Olujimi withdraws gender equality bill as religion, ethnicity, sentiment split senators. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/12/olujimi-withdraws-gender-equality-bill-as-religion-ethnicity-sentiment-split-senators/>.
- Vanguard (2022). Editorial: Affirmative Action: The Struggle Must Continue. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/03/affirmative-action-the-struggle-must-continue/>.
- Vanguard (2017). Adopt media ethics while reporting violence- Communication Directors advise. Retrieved from <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/adopt-media-ethics-reporting-violence-communication-directors-advise/>.
- World Economic Forum (2021). Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/reports/ab6795a1-960c-42b2-b3d5-587eccda6023/digest?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2764284_Agenda_weekly31December2021&utm_term=&emailType=Agenda%20Weekly.
- Yabaleftonline (2022). Outrage as Malaysian female minister advises husbands to beat their 'stubborn' wives 'gently' to discipline them for 'unruly' behaviour. Retrieved from http://opr.news/f48e2d0220216en_ng?link=1&client=news.