



Journalism Practice and Gender Constraints: A Survey of Female Journalists in Port Harcourt

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate the challenges faced by female journalists with regards to the proportion of female journalists as against their male counterpart in the profession, with emphasis on appointment, promotion, posting and progression. In order to give perspective to the study, objectives and corresponding research questions were developed. Mixed-method analysis approach was adopted by the researcher. This researcher therefore collected both quantitative and qualitative data, using questionnaire and interviews. The population of the study was 210 which comprised of registered women journalists in Rivers State. The Taro Yamane formula was used to arrive at a sample size of 138, whereas the simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used for the selection of respondents in the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study respectively. Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed, using frequency tables and the Likert Scale to find out the Weighted Mean Scores of responses. Findings showed that, there exist various forms of gender issues or gender discrimination among journalists in Rivers State, attributable to different causes, which has also hindered the development of the profession; and that, these anomalies persist despite several concerted efforts to curb the menace, that this discrimination is attributable to the culture and attitude of the men towards competition with women. The study concluded that gender discrimination is an inhibiting factor to the development of journalism practice in Rivers State. The study recommended that adequate sensitization of members, close monitoring and sanctioning of erring members and organizations, among others, as measures to curb the problem, in order to engender gender equality and development of the journalism profession.

Keywords: Challenges, Female, Journalists, Proportion, Counterpart, Profession, Practice, Gender, Constraints.

INTRODUCTION

The unequal power relations that work to naturalize the categories that are used to understand the world, such as, gender, class, race, nation and a particular way of seeing the world, result in the marginalization and oppression of certain groups of people (Volcic, 2008). It is perceived that women constitute the majority of the category of persons marginalized. Okunna (1992) states that "...a combination of cultural and religious factors have reduced women to mere appendages of their male counterparts" (p. 49). This assertion has been lent credence in various researches (Malik, 2002; Amuche, 2015; Enwefah, 2016; Safa & Akter, 2015).

Also, it is claimed that there exist diverse forms of marginalization and oppression towards women journalists. Safa & Akter (2015) assert that "the female journalists recognized stereotyped attitudes, unreasonable treatment, harassment by male colleagues, were paid less as compared to male colleagues in media houses and job insecurity as the other reasons that prompt them to give up the profession" (p.207). Djerf-Pierre (2007) concurs when he avers that "newspaper journalism was

clearly gendered in the early years of the past century, with certain positions and areas of coverage designated for men and women” (p.84).

At this instance, it is pertinent to examine the salient role ascribed to women by society, which, to an extent, has shaped the designated role prescription. Damean (2006) sees gender as consisting of constructing an image and assuming a social role. Nwosu (2012) avers that “the role and importance of women in society have remained issues of serious concern and debate” (p.1240). MacBride & Sean (1981) posit that in every society, public attitudes regarding the role of women in society are a major factor in deciding the status of women.

In a typical traditional African society such as Nigeria, women were not only perceived as inferior to men but were marginalized and denied equal opportunities as they were treated as a lower gender. Obioha & Chima (2009) add that the general belief is that the role of women starts and ends with running the home and nothing more. Sanusi & Adelabu (2015) emphasize that women were believed to be the weaker sex created to be nurtured as helpers that were meant to stay back at home while men go to work. Ani (2004) states that women constitute the group at the bottom of the ladder in respect to employment, training and status.

Thus, it can be deduced that most societies prescribed roles for men and women by social norms where men were assigned primary roles as breadwinners, meant to provide for the family while women were saddled with the secondary roles of baby-making and taking care of the home. This, to a large extent, has determined or shaped the kind of job men and women do in the society.

Journalism which is the investigation and reporting of events, issues and happenings etc. in the society to a large audience was perceived to be a rigorous job. As such, Enwefah (2016) (as cited in Wolseley & Campbell, 1943) believes that “editors are men and prefer to hire men; and that the woman who doesn’t believe her place to be in the home should choose an occupation sheltered from the ugly realities that journalists encounter” (p.18). Enwefah (2016) states further that the rigours associated with news collection and processing, working odd and unusually long hours, the many hazards of journalism etc., probably necessitate the statement that journalism was a man’s job. Steiner (2007) is of the view that newspaper work was seen as so demanding that many women who could teach or do ordinary work could not stand up under it, and so should be left in the hands of women to decide.

The aforementioned hindrances did not completely dissuade women from taking a foray into journalism. Thus Sanusi & Adelabu (2015) stress that:

Women started venturing into journalism practice in the 50s. They were, however, restricted mainly to women and domestic issues, at other times, they wrote under pseudonyms to hide their identity because of the prevailing social and cultural milieu of that period (p.2).

Ikem (1996) adds that the entry point for women journalists was through the women’s page. In the early 1900s, women were restricted to society reporting and were to cover the latest in food or fashion. There were thus, few women who reported on subjects that were considered the domain of male reporters (Sanusi & Adelabu, 2015). Today, there is an unprecedented surge of women in the practice and agitation for not only greater inclusion and involvement at leadership and decision levels but also in the agitation for a balanced male-female representation in different capacities in the profession (Anorve, 2012; Sanusi & Adelabu, 2015; Gray & Hessel, 2014).

Women journalists have also launched associations or identity organisations, such as the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and Women in the Media (WIM) in conjunction with National Council of Women Society (NCWS) to address the organizational gender issues surrounding women journalists. Based on the foregoing, this study seeks to explore gender constraints among women journalists in Rivers State to ascertain whether there are similar trends of marginalization in their practice as well as other issues inherent in journalism practice.

Statement of the Problem

Struggle for supremacy between the sexes in human race has been an enigma as it has continued to be a universal phenomenon, the origin of which cannot be easily determined. Many scholars have thus observed that, society is usually construed in terms of male and female, which also reflects biologically and in every aspect of human endeavour Littlejohn (1999). It is further observed that history, in its recording of events also shortchanged the feminine gender, as issues are presented mostly in the masculine gender. This is obvious in the major religions of the world namely,

Christianity, Islam and African Traditional practices in which, male dominance is propagated, by way of role differentiations based on gender or sex. In this regard, there are several gender issues as to what kind of job is to be taken by the male and female folks.

Journalism which is seen as a man's job has received a perceived loud unabated cry for equal and fair representation of women journalists. It is perceived that, in spite of women's concerted efforts at getting to the top of the profession, they are most often, found at the lower end of newspaper employment and in middle management, with serious difficulty in moving from managing editor to higher positions. In the face of this perceived anomaly, while some scholars have continued to accuse the world's news media, including Nigerian press, for failure in their ethical responsibility to promote the course of women by not giving women issues the attention they deserve, the media seems to be at a fix.

What is not clear however, is the level of this discrimination in media house, one is not sure if this discrimination is as of a matter of corporate policy or mere allegations, it is also not clear this discrimination even exists in media houses. It is against this backdrop, that this research seeks to carry out a survey of female journalists practice and gender constraints in Port Harcourt.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

- i. To find out if there is any gender discrimination among women journalists in Rivers State.
- ii. To investigate challenges faced by women journalists in Rivers State.

Research Questions

- i. What gender issues exist among women journalists in Rivers State?
- ii. What challenges do women journalists face in Rivers State?

Significance of the Study

While it is a fact that scholarship is replete with studies on gender discrimination. This study will add to the body of knowledge as it will be beneficial to several bodies as well as institutions. The study will help the regulatory bodies of journalism like the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Nigerian Guild of Editors by prompting them to look into gender discriminations based on policy formulation. The study will also guide other institutions to recognize the fact that women play a significant role in the growth and development of the institution. The study will further lend a voice to women in society by sensitizing them to resist being discriminated against and treated like second or inferior fiddles. In addition, the study will strengthen the mass communication industry and schools of journalism in Nigeria to identify, eliminate and close all gaps of male dominance in the course of training. The study will also serve as reference material to scholars thereby, enriching scholarship.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Gender Role Theory

The role theory has from its very beginnings the extensive history. Social philosopher George Herbert Mead, anthropologist Ralph Linton and psychologist Jacob Moreno are considered the founders of the role theory. Beres Connell (2005) states that role theory is the degree to which human social behaviour is prescribed. Janebova (2008) role theory is an incentive for exploring gender and role stereotypes which are very often strengthened and reproduced precisely in terms of roles of women, male, breadwinner, mother, father etc.

Gender relations can be analyzed from four theoretical perspectives namely, structural-functionalism, biological determinism, conflict school of thought and feminism (Nwosu, 2012). This study is hinged on the structural-functionalism and biological determinism. According to Talcott (cited in Ekong, 2010), gender differences help to integrate society. This is achieved through the complementarity of roles between the females and males as culturally determined by the society. Igbo (2003) explains that the structural-functional theory views society as comprising of inter-related and inter-dependent parts which function in a coordinated way to ensure the survival of the society. Igbo (2003) states that the theory holds the view that human society has certain basic needs called functional pre-requisites as represented by the structural units or parts.

The biological determinism of the role theory emphasizes the psychological differences in the make-up of males and females and how those differences have shaped social relationship between the sexes (Ekong, 2010). George (1996) avers that the biological determinist position holds that biology is destiny; and that human nature and society are dictated largely by the demand of human physiology

and that there is an essential unchanging difference between the masculine and the feminine. The theory is predicted on the male domination and assumed superiority of the male sex over the female in most human societies.

Furthermore, cultural determinism of gender role theory asserts that culture (i.e. the norms, beliefs, values etc.) and society are the actual determinants of gender differences in societies. And that through the culturally approved pattern of behaviour, mostly for males and females are transmitted to members of the society for purpose of forging appropriate gender identity in the society.

Eagly (1987) states that the gender role theory is grounded in the supposition that individuals socially identified as males and females tend to occupy different ascribed roles within social structures and tend to be judged against divergent expectations for how they ought to behave. Thus, males and females will develop different skills and attitudes behave differently. Hyde (2005) observes that gender role theory predicts (a) the communication behaviours of females and males and (b) the evaluation of the same communication behaviour, when females and males perform it.

The theory summarizes that gender role predicts differences or similarities between males and females based on the degree of variations in ascribed roles and related evaluations. This theory goes to galvanize the Social Identity theory in setting limitations for women in society. This further goes to buttress the observation of Lorber (2005) when he argues that the term gender is:

A social construct, a legal designation and personal identity. Through the social processes of gendering, gender divisions and their accompanying norms and role expectations are built into the major social institutions of society, such as economy, the family, the state, culture, religion and the law (p 9).

Women in Journalism

Over the years journalism globally used to be men's domain and addressed as 'gentlemen of the press'. The history of journalism practice in Nigeria is first started by the Presbyterian Church located in Calabar and later relocated to Abeokuta by late Reverend Henry Townsend. The first newspaper publication was on December 3, 1859 which was written in Yoruba dialect known as *IweIroyin Fun Aron Ara Egbaati Yoruba*; implying a newspaper publication written for the Egba and Yorubas'. The primary aim for the establishment of the paper was to get people to read (Ajibade, 2003).

The rise of nationalism brought about the establishment of other newspapers across the country. At this period journalism practice was solely dominated by men. Women were nowhere to be found in the practice of journalism in Nigeria. Sanusi & Adelabu (2015) aver that in the early 50s in Nigeria due to the global agitation for gender equality and empowerment in all sectors led to changes in gender role in journalism practice as women started venturing into the profession.

Sanusi & Adelabu (2015) (cited in Coker, 1952) chronicled how the journey of women in the profession in Nigeria went, thus: "The first breakthrough for women in this male dominated profession was in feature writing with the establishment of the Nigeria Daily Times, when lively feature articles began to appear with boxed titled-head" (p189).

When women started venturing into journalism practice in the 50s, they were restricted mainly to women and domestic issues and sometimes, they wrote under pseudonyms to hide their identity mainly because of the prevailing social and cultural milieu of that period (Sanusi & Adelabu, 2015, p.3). Thus, Abiola (1986), cited in Ikem (1996) states:

An era when the women's page is exclusively reserved for women regardless of their educational background and qualification. And the sad part is women accepted this notion almost as a God-given rule. They ... believed... that the entry point for woman journalist is through the women page (p189).

Today, there are notable numbers of women in the profession with significant contributions. It is a new dawn for women in the journalist practice. Ikem (1996) describes the situation as a drastically dynamic venture with remarkable positions occupied by women, great progress in the content of the page they edit and covers wider issues of development.

Gendering and Status: Identity Issues

Djerf-Pierre (2007) posits that "the influence of women in journalism is one of the most central problem areas in feminist media research" (p.81). Djerf-Pierre adds that true, women made up fully

half of the profession, but the feminization of journalism has hardly been achieved without a struggle. Ojiakor (1997) posits that Nigerian men have always believed journalism profession was for them, and over the years, women have struggled to say no to this misconception. Djerf-Pierre (2007) idealizes that certain positions and areas of coverage was designated for men and women respectively. Writing of columns and serial fiction, content on home-making, housekeeping and child care, consumer affairs and women's rights issues were designated to them. Then most other areas of journalism were male-dominated, particularly business news, politics and international affairs.

Gray & Hessel (2014) observe that journalism was coded as the most masculine practice, and women were widely held as being unable to handle either the physical or moral demands of work in the newsroom. Crawford (1894) warned aspiring women. This, absurdity, unfortunately seems to have formed the organizational identity of many professions including journalism.

Organizational identity refers to the structure of the institution the journalist is working for (De Bruin, 2004). According to Breed (1995), organizational identity are policies of the organization which are targeted at achieving organizational goals, with the recognition of the interests of individual members despite difference in gender. Thus, when considering organizational identity, the journalist always put into account, features of organizational culture, such as dedication to obligation, respect for superiors, focus, news comes first, absence of conflicting group allegiance and etc. The individual must be able to balance the aforementioned organizational identity with his/her professional identity in order to achieve set tasks.

Professional identity, in this context, refers to the professional principles or culture an individual brings to bear in the organization. It consists of values that bind the different strata of an organization and leads such organization to the achievement of goals. In the journalism profession, for example, the journalistic ethic of objectivity, fairness and balance guide the media professionals to achieve organizational success (De Bruin, 2004). There can be a clash of the three identities. For example as De Bruin notes, a journalist whose professional identity resists writing commercial stories may be forced into doing so by their organizational identity. Also, a male journalist that resists humanizing stories due to his gender identity, may make his story more personal because his organizational identity demands it. The concern of this study however is on gender identity.

Silva (2008) posits that, gender is often defined as a cultural system rather than the biological system that defines a person's sex, and it is affected and organized by social and society factors. Pech (2006) stresses that, social construction of gender can materialize over time, and individuals form opinions of what it means to be female or male based on several factors. Rosussll (2007) citing Levant (2007) adds that, the social constructs are internalized and acted out in gender approved behaviours, and forms a basis for gender ideology which becomes a tradition or spectrum of beliefs. Gender defines the relationship that has been socially constructed and institutionalized.

Ogbuagu (2005) explains that the purpose for constructing gender is for power allocation, duties, responsibilities, statuses and roles. He further notes that it is universally conceptualized either as an organizing concept which can be innocuously interpreted as neutral or as a value-laden concept which is applied to impose discriminatory practices against one group by another within a given society.

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that, the role men and women play in a given society, is merely based on perceptions of their abilities as culturally constructed and determined. Little wonder why Igbo (2003) emphasizes that, gender role are assumed pattern of behaviour which society expects from a category of persons. Similarly, Uchem (2005) is of the view that, gender roles are learned from childhood and vary from one culture to another and changes over time, since they are human made. These cultural norms, to an extent, have encouraged women to be passive and men to wield power and to impose their will upon others, especially, women. This power, very often, leads to physical discrimination on women. They are subordinated to the male folk and considered inferior (Nwosu, 2012).

This influence on women, even in the journalism profession often finds expressions in attitude and practice, thus manifesting in form of stereotyping and restrictions. Nwosu (2012, p.1242) highlights the following forms of stereotypes and restrictions:

- (1) Ascription of social status to the physiological and physical differences between men and women with the former, of course considered to be superior to the latter.
- (2) The common practices of patriarchy, by which the man is traditionally regarded to be the head of the family.

Against this backdrop, it can be stated that gender roles are not natural or biological, but roles assigned between males and female are culturally exerted by society.

Djerf-Pierre (2007) stresses that, in the journalism field, status, prestige and power, which relate to the different conceptions of gender are problematized. He stated that, journalism originated as a male domain, to which women were denied access, with certain positions and areas of coverage designated for men and women. This implies that inequality, relations of dominance and subordination characterizes the profession.

Djerf-Pierre (2007) further observes that, the difference in status in the journalism profession was seen as 'high' and 'low' culture, and reflected in the different status of "masculine" and "feminine". Also, these distinctions, according to him, imbue genres and forms of expression between social reportage and gossip journalism, general reporters and specialized ones, business magazines and women's weeklies. This means that all male-dominated genres are accorded high status.

Femininity Identity in Journalism

Damean (2006) opines that feminine identity is construed when the woman manages to display an image recognized as feminine and play role suited to her gender. When an individual acquire an identity by constructing an image and plays a role that can be identified by others in the society, then an identity has being created. When this situation happens, feminine identity has successfully being constructed.

According to Djerf-Pierre (2007), inequality and relations of dominance and subordination characterize all social fields. As such, the realm of journalism is no exception. Damean (2006) states that women's image in the journalism field reflects social prejudices regarding women's most appropriate roles in a given society. Dominance, subordination and control are generally associated with masculinity, women's representation in top position has not increased in anywhere near the same proportion to the men counterpart. Djerf-Pierre (2007) posits that "the positions of power that women have attained are merely in magazine publishing and public service broadcasting, both radio and television, Djerf-Pierre characterized the situation as the position of the dominated".

Okunna (1992) avers that in Nigeria, both the larger society and the male sub-culture see women and their aspirations as unquestionably subordinate, and the marginalization, trivialization and stereotyping of women in the journalism field. Malik (2002) states that despite all the technological developments in the journalism field that has helped smoothen their task and performance, there is still gender gap for women working in the media. Eiman and El-Hassan (2010) mention that there exist segregation, where more of women are at the bottom of the hierarchy and far more men at the top; which is dully to discrimination.

Journalism is looked upon as a locus of an ongoing contest and struggle, where there are winners and losers. Pech (2006) states that misrepresentations of women, have produced gender inequalities that transition into real life. Pech adds that "these inequalities are manifested in stereotypes, which suggest that a female character, by virtue of being female, possesses all the qualities that are commonly associated with women" (p.4). Lorber and Farrell (1991) aver that these stereotypes tend to complement historically constructed ideas of gender roles and are perpetuated repeatedly in the media. These stereotypes according to Lorber and Farrell can provide limiting representations of what it's like to be a woman to young adolescent girls, skewing her social construction of healthy gender identity.

Femininity and feminism make-up of female media characters is operationalized in two forms in the contemporary media: traditional femininity and contemporary femininity (Roussell, 2013). James (2011) states that in the traditional femininity, "girl" or woman is associated with "weakness, vulnerability, gentleness and some extent invisibility" (p.404). Levant & Richmond (2007) suggest that traditional femininity see woman that they do not initiate sexual relationships or voice needs or desires, rather opting to accept male advances or wait for pursuit by men. The traditional femininity has been linked with ignorance and objectification, which raises concern that traditional femininity could harm women's self-efficacy and personal fulfillment (Levant & Richmond, 2007). The contemporary femininity promotes empowerment of the woman, where they are portrayed as robust, having strong sense of self, combines independence and individualism (Banet-Weiser, 2004).

Research Design

For the purpose of achieving the objectives of the study and understanding the issues thrown up by the research problem, the researcher used mixed methods approach. This approach is in tandem with

Creswell & Clark (2011), cited in Creswell (2012), where he posits that a mixed-methods research design is a method of gathering, analysing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study, or a series of studies, in order to understand a research problem. Also, Jakob (2001), cited in Yeasmin & Rahman (2012) argues that:

By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and empirical materials, researchers can hope to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single-method, single-observer, and single-theory studies. Often the purpose of triangulation in specific contexts is to obtain confirmation of findings through convergence of different perspectives. The point at which the perspectives converge is seen to represent reality (p 154).

The method is proved to be the most convenient and effective method of studies in the Social Sciences as Communication and media; and in this case, gender issues amongst female journalists. This method will not only lead to the proper validation of the research results, but is also aimed at deepening and widening one's understanding of the phenomenon, resulting to substantial and reliable conclusion. It is therefore the aim of the researcher to mix both quantitative and qualitative research approaches in order to harness the advantages inherent in each of them in one study.

Considering the aim of this research, which is to get the views of female journalists in Rivers State in ascertaining prevalent issues/challenges faced by them, it was deemed necessary by the researcher during the period of investigation to collect both quantitative and qualitative data sequentially in accordance with the chosen research design. Thus, for the purpose of this study, while survey (quantitative) was used to collect primary data, in-depth interviews (qualitative) was used to collect supplementary data. This means, the qualitative data was used as supportive to augment the quantitative where information is not provided by the latter. According to Creswell (2012), augmentation helps to gather information that typically addresses a different question from that asked for by the primary form of data.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises all registered female journalists working in Rivers State. The population of women journalists in Rivers States stands at 210 (Chairperson, NAWOJ, Rivers State) 2018.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sample size is the smallest unit from which sample can be selected (Moataza, 2008) while sampling involves the selection of a number of study units from a define study population (Laos, 2009).

Using the sample size determination formula in Yamane(1967) which is: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$

Where n = Sample size

N = Population

e = Margin of error. (.05).

Therefore, $n = \frac{210}{1 + 210(.05)^2} = 137.70 = 138$ (approx.).

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Whether forms of discrimination exist and need to curb them

| Item | SA | A | U | D | SD | Total | WMS | Decision |
|---|-----|----|---|---|----|-------|-----|----------|
| a) There are forms of discrimination against the female in placement, promotion or appointment to positions or beats. | 103 | 32 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 138 | 4.7 | Agree |
| b) There is need for creating a policy which allows for equal treatment for all, regardless of sex or gender. | 130 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 138 | 4.9 | Agree |
| c) There is a need for the Management of Media Houses to ensure female journalists are not deprived of anything. | 130 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 138 | 4.9 | Agree |

Table 2: Need for equal opportunity to both sexes through merit

| Item | SA | A | U | D | SD | Total | WMS | Decision |
|---|-----|----|----|---|----|-------|-----|----------|
| d) There is a need for Management of Media Houses to give positions to staff based on merit and not gender | 138 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 138 | 5 | Agree |
| e) There is a need for the Management of Media houses to reshuffle journalists regularly to cover different beats without regards to gender or sex. | 75 | 46 | 12 | 5 | 0 | 138 | 4.3 | Agree |

Table 3: Need for adequate sensitization on professional ethics and sanctions to defaulters of identical issues

| Item | SA | A | U | D | SD | Total | WMS | Decision |
|---|-----|----|---|---|----|-------|-----|----------|
| h) There is a need for the Management of Media houses to improve the competence of its staff through regular refresher trainings. match professional needs of individuals with organisational needs in the pursuit of achieving the organizational goals. | 129 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 138 | 4.9 | Agree |
| i) There is a need for the regulators of the journalism practice to organise sensitization on gender issues in the profession and how to eradicate it. | 100 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 138 | 4.7 | Agree |
| j) There is need for the regulators to impose stringent penalty on any media organization that defaults on gender issues in the course of appointment, placement and promotion of staff. | 108 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 138 | 4.7 | Agree |

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study aimed at looking at gender issues among female journalists in Rivers State. It is trite knowledge that culture and tradition, especially in Africa is discriminatory against the feminine gender. These biases manifest in different forms and ramifications, including pay discrimination, employment discrimination, professional discrimination, position discrimination and discrimination in access to training (Zwiech, 2009). While some scholars attribute such anomalies to religion, Djerf-Pierre (2007), some others blame society in general for the skewed attitude against women. Damean (2006) and Nwosu (2012) in their different works, argue that, such discriminatory practices in society have also led to the assignment of roles to female journalists in the profession.

The triangulation or mixed-method approach was used to gather relevant data to enable the researcher answer the following research questions:

- i. What are the challenges faced by women journalists in Rivers State?
- ii. What are the gender constraints among women journalists in Rivers State?
- iii. What is the proportion of male-to-female journalists in Rivers State?
- iv. What are the possible ways in achieving a fair and balanced representation among women journalists in Rivers State?

Research Question 1

According to table 1 above, gender issues manifest by way of limiting female journalists to certain positions and beats while the male journalists are free to fit in anywhere. As shown on the table, only 6 respondents indicated to be serving as either General Manager or Managing Editor, while 15 (10.9%) serve as Editors and large number in the area of Reporters or Correspondents. Thus most of

the women are seen to be performing less tasking jobs, such as clerk, writers and others. This puts paid to the assertion by Enwefah (2016), when he says that owing to the discriminatory practices in the journalism profession, seen as exclusive domain for the menfolk, women are most often, placed at the lower rung of ladder of employment and even issues to write on.

On the qualitative data, Participants R6 and R10 said their discussions at management level were centered on security of the female journalists and incessant complains of incompetence when it comes to covering of beats, and that, there are certain beats the female journalists may not be able to cover due to some debilitating challenges both at the family level, work and as a woman. R4, R5, R6, R7 and R9 stated late coming to appointments on the part of the female journalists is one issue that is frequently discussed in their meetings. This further goes to buttress the assertion in answer to research question 2 in highlighting such gender issues as deprivation in appointment to leadership positions, limitation in the posting to some beats and stereotyping.

Research Question 2

On the question of the ratio between male journalists and female journalists, number 3 on the interview guide will be of help. In the interview, R6 – R10 argue that, while it would be ethically wrong to limit the female journalists to certain bits or positions, reality on ground demands retrain in given certain tasks to women, especially those tasks with high risk potential. For that reason, more male journalists are employed in their organisations thus R10 declared that there were 9 male journalists as against 3 female journalists in her media organization. For R1 –R5, it may not necessarily proper to send a female journalist on such a risky mission without a male companion, since such backup arrangement is part of the practice of journalism, hence more male journalists are fashionable but could not give the precise ratio. From the reasons adduced and declarations made by the interviewees, even if there is no precise figure, it is obvious that male journalists are more in number compared to their female counterparts.

SUMMARY

This work was carried out with the aim of investigating gender issues among female journalists in Rivers State. In order to achieve this, the researcher set out four objectives, namely, to investigate challenges faced by female journalists in Rivers State, to find if there are female identity discrimination issues in the journalism profession as practiced in Rivers State, to also the proportion or level of female participation in relation to their male counterparts and ascertain ways of achieving balanced representation between male and female journalists in Rivers State.

In order to understand the problems arising from the objectives and to arrive at a valid finding, the mixed method approach or triangulation was adopted by the researcher. This resulted in the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in this study.

After due presentation and analysis of the data so collected, the resultant findings are as follows: That female journalists in Rivers State face some challenges in the course of their professional practice. These challenges include but not limited to sexual harassment, problem of balancing family work demands and professional work demands, problem of contending with jealous and suspicious spouses etc. Also, gender issues, such as discrimination against female journalists on appointment to some positions and beats as well as stereotyping amongst others were identified. These aforementioned imbalances have led to practice where more male journalists are employed into leadership positions as against the few women in such positions and beats. In the face of this, while organisations have structures in place to ensure non-discriminatory practices in accordance with the ethics of the profession, implementation of such policies is anything but perfect. This has continued to aggravate the issue of gender discrimination in amongst female journalists in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it was revealed that gender discrimination is an inhibiting factor to the development of journalism practice in Rivers State. This issue is attributable to the culture and attitude of the men towards competition with women. The culture of the people of Rivers State, which indeed is the African culture is not favourable to the womenfolk. This informs why the female journalist has to contend with several challenges both at home and place of work, which in turn attracts the gender issues highlighted in the study. For instance, African culture sees the woman as good for the home and nothing else but to serve the man, hence whenever she is not at home the man feels she must be

pleasing another man elsewhere. This attitude always put the woman on edge, making her lose concentration in her place of work. It is the view of the researcher that until an appropriate solution is proffered for this problem of male chauvinism, female identity issues will be strong, no matter the number of laws and organizational policies available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is true that in recent times, women have become visible in the public sphere, by way of handling elective positions in politics and gaining appointments into leadership positions at different tiers of government in Nigeria, this however, has not reflected much in the area of access to the media.

In this regard, the power of the media as tool for mobilization cannot be overstressed as it has proven to be a veritable instrument for advancement in many climes. It is not in dispute that there are various international and domestic laws, including the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) that frown at any discriminatory practice in any form, the implementation of such laws cannot be said to be good.

In the light of the above, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations:

1. Gender equality should be taught in the schools at basic levels so as to instill in the children, respect for the opposite sex for them to grow up with it.
2. Also, there should be put in place a powerful mechanism to detect sexual harassment and related acts of gender discrimination in any organization, and culprits dealt with according to the dictates of the law.
3. Furthermore, strict sanction should be laid down for any individual or organization found to be engaging in discriminatory practices against female journalists. This will not be enough or effective if it is done without proper monitoring mechanism. Against this backdrop, proper structure should be put in place to always track perpetrators without unnecessarily exposing the victims to more victimization.
4. Since one of the causes of gender issues against female journalists, is the cultural beliefs, there need to be a mass sensitization for Cultural Revolution. This is imperative considering the huge gap between the 18th Century and today, where women do virtually everything hitherto believed to solely for men. Today, the possibility of women becoming presidents in African countries is no longer an imagination but real, hence there is nothing a woman cannot do. This sensitization should also include male journalists and media practitioners in order to create attitudinal change in them with regards to equal participation with their women counterparts in the profession.

Another group that needs sensitization, in this regards, is the religious organization as they wield enormous influence on the members which includes the men folk. This becomes necessary especially when wedding a couple where the pastor or imam is expected to advise the latter. Such religious leader should do well to advise the husband to give some level of freedom to the wife in order for her to play role in society.

5. Again, as it is also found out in the study that there exists some measure of risks in some areas of journalism practice, government should ensure security of journalists and indeed other persons engaged in guiding and sanitizing society. This will be effective and serve as deterrent to others only if anyone who maltreats a journalist is dealt with using the maximum force of law instead of giving such offender a slap on the back as obtainable in present day society.
6. Self-regulation on the part of journalists is imperative to the eradication of gender discrimination issues in the profession. The ethics of journalism profession is one that abhors discrimination in any form, hence must strictly regulate its members to ensure adherence. This could be achieved through the setting up of structures to discretely monitor media organisations and sanction anyone found to be defaulting.

On the part of the female journalists, they must first sensitize themselves and prepare themselves to compete equally with their male counterparts. This preparation will demand the sanitization of the home front, good education and readiness to take and deliver on any legitimate task assigned to them. In the alternative, female journalists can even pull resources together and set up their own media organisations to compete with their male counterparts unhindered.

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