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Career Considerations in Journalism Among Female Mass Communication Students of Taraba State University

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the career considerations in journalism among female mass communication students of Taraba State University. The study adopted the survey research method with questionnaire as the instrument. 125 questionnaires were distributed and 100 were dully filled and retrieved. Data were coded and analyzed with SPSS version 22 and presented in pie charts for clearer understanding. The study is anchored on social cognitive theory. The findings of the study revealed that female mass communication students of Taraba State University have the wish of practicing journalism upon graduation and prefer advertising and news casting against reporting and other forms of journalism. Findings also revealed that gender discrimination is the major factor that dissuades female students from taking up journalism as a career upon graduation. In reversing this trend, the study recommends among other things that institutions of learning should imbibe on female journalism students the need to take up journalism as a career upon graduation. Families, religions, cultures and the society at large should also desist from the discriminating female journalist.

Keywords: Journalism, Female, Mass Communication, Taraba State University, Profession

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

There is no doubt that Journalism is one of the sought after profession by many in the world today. But it has been observed that the female gender always aspire to study journalism but do not wish to practice it. Expressing their view on this, Patricia et al (2015)

postulate that "from the inception of Journalism as an area of specialization in Mass Communication studies among Nigerian Universities in the 1960s, enrollments have been largely populated by female students. Studies have found that only a few of these female students opt for a career in journalism upon graduation". Okoro and Chinweobo-Onuoha (2013), define journalism to be a veritable tool for information dissemination, social mobilization, and control. It is a means of public education and sensitization on important issues affecting the lives of the people. This means that Journalism is the collection, preparation and distribution of news and related commentary and feature materials through such media as a pamphlet, newsletter, magazines, radio, motion pictures, television, Bill Boards the internet and Books (Ali, 2010).

Although journalism is a superfluous profession that requires both the male and female gender, it has been noticed that there are far more female students in the discipline of mass communication but in contrast, studies revealed that only a few of these ladies become journalists. According to Ali (2010), diverse survey conducted across various institutions that offer journalism in Nigeria reveal that the population of female students significantly outnumber their male colleagues, but only a few of these ladies follow through to have a career in journalism as they have been found to prefer to take on careers in other specializations of broadcasting, advertising, public relations, and production.

Over the years, the female gender is said to have come under-represented in various fields of human endeavor. Although research has proven that women have the same abilities and skills like their male counterparts, the discrepancy between male and female gender continue to thrive, even in the face of the global struggle to ensure gender equality. Elaborating on this assertion, Gambo and Lenshie (2014) opined that:

The female gender in Nigeria is almost excluded in the decision-making process. It is a known fact that women opportunities for participation are generally limited in Nigeria. This is central to the socio-economic and political organization of women and sometimes, their total exclusion from the decision-making process at all levels in the society (Gambo and Lenshie 2014).

As far as the above scholars are concerned, there is a high rate of enrolment into journalism as a study and not as a profession. This implies that women love to study communication courses in tertiary institutions but do not wish to practice the profession. This could be due to fear, stereotyping, and attitude of people towards women as journalists or even husbands decision on female journalist.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to ascertain the career consideration in journalism among female mass communication students of Taraba State University. Examining their perception towards journalism as career, career option(s) in journalism that appeals to them as well as the factors that affect their career consideration in journalism.

Statement of the Problem

An obvious factor in the Nigeria media today and even in the past is the near absence of Nigeria women as reporters". Since Nigeria is developing, it is vital for the female journalists and their male counterparts to be competing in the media houses. The number of female journalists in the field is very few compared to the number that graduates from journalism schools and universities. Commenting on this issue, (Ali, 2010) submits that:

there is a low participation of the female Journalist graduates towards practicing Journalism as their career. Despite the fact that there is a considerably good number of trained female journalists, very few of them are working with media houses in Nigeria.

There is also the issue of what category of journalism practice a female graduate should venture into, since there is high discrimination of female journalist. Patricia et al (2015) opine that some specific career options in journalism include: reporting, investigative journalism, photojournalism, columnist, analysts and the list goes on. Therefore the study unveils the career consideration in journalism of female mass communication students, Taraba State University.

Research questions

The study is anchored on the following questions:

1. What is the perception of female mass communication students towards journalism as a career?
2. What career option(s) in journalism appeal to the female students of Mass Communication, Taraba State University?
3. What are the factors that affect career consideration of female mass communication students towards journalism?

Explicating Literature

Journalism profession has been dominated by the male over the years. The female shy away from the practice of journalism due to many factors. Ememyeonu (1991) in a study on factors that motivate Nigerian female students at the tertiary level to take up journalism training discovered that most female students surveyed consider journalism to be a profession as much suited for women as for men. However, they would prefer more glamorous roles in television, radio, public relations or advertising to aspects of journalism such as reporting. Furthermore, in another study, he tried to determine the perception of mass communication students on the performance of Nigerian female journalists.

55% respondents were of the opinion that Nigerian female journalists were as good and as productive as their male colleagues.

Patricia et al (2015) carried out a research to find out the perception of female students of Mass Communication on the career opportunities for the female journalist in Nigeria, if these students would consider a career in journalism, the specific career options they would consider, and the factor(s) that inform their decision. Adopting the survey research methodology, a sample size of 100 female students was randomly selected from a population of 163 female students across the four levels (100 – 400) from Redeemers University (RUN). The findings reveal that the students are not oblivious to the fact that career development for female journalists in Nigeria is challenged by the fact that they do not enjoy the same career opportunities as their male counterpart, and the family responsibility of a woman also makes it difficult to adequately fulfill the career expectations required in journalism. However, the majority (63%) of them perceives Journalism to be a good profession for women, and 58% would positively consider a career in journalism, especially in the area of photojournalism. The majority (52%) of these students are interested in journalism because it would afford them the opportunity to gain diversified knowledge.

Ali (2010) carried out a similar study that focused on the attitude of female Mass Communication Students towards journalism as a career. It is believed that a large number of female trained journalists are produced from different higher Institutions in our country, but only a few go into the field to practice their journalism profession. This is why the researcher dimmed it fit to research into the image of female journalists. The survey method was adopted, and this made it possible for the researcher to select an appropriate sample size of 150. Using appropriate tools like the questionnaire and personal interview, the researcher was able to study a population too large to be observed personally. The researcher adopted a simple percentage and frequency table with simple descriptive analysis to explain the tables. Hypotheses which are formed from the research questions are tested to enable the researcher to know if certain claims she made on this work received statistical support or not. Findings reveal that female mass communication students have a negative attitude towards journalism as a career. Also, that female role as mothers and wives are some of the problems facing female Journalists. The researcher also recommended that salaries of the working journalists should be increased so as to motivate and change the negative attitude of female mass communication students towards journalism as a career. Also, our culture and society at large should stop discriminating against female journalists so that they can practice their profession perfectly.

For instance, Ferri and Keller (1986) sampled 136 female, full-time news anchors in commercial television stations. A majority of their respondents stressed the over-emphasis on physical appearance as a barrier. One of the respondents complained that people always asked his male co-anchor about the latest 'hot' story while they asked her about her clothes. Another barrier identified was the problem of overcoming stereotypical attitudes about women's appropriate roles in society. One of the anchors reported having once had a woman call up to say: 'Don't say goodnight, that's a man's job.' Another anchor complained: 'My co-anchor (male) has a beer with local police, trying to make contacts or pick up some information. But when I do that, the officers are suspicious and make comments about me staying out late.' Yet another barrier mentioned was the conflict between their roles in the families and their career. In a different study which examined the possible effects of the stereotypes on the career development of female journalists, Reep and Dambrot (1987) reported that the stereotype factor was not strong enough to daunt women. They rather found, from a study of 13 programs in which women played leading roles, that women were financially successful, excited about their career, and could be competent in demanding jobs. They, however, found that a majority of their respondents 'paid their price by being less than perfect mothers and by lacking romance.'

There is clear evidence that female journalism students point out an equally favorable disposition to careers in journalism.

Theoretical framework

This study is embedded on the **Social Cognitive theory**. Social Cognitive theory was propounded by Philip and Ziller (1992). The theory has been observed to have a similar mode of orientation and behavior which relates people in the same social cognitive to such phenomena as Mass Communication and media similar ways. In contribution, Agbo et al (2000, p. 151) stressed that “member of a particular social category will select more or less similar Communication content and will respond to it roughly equal way”.

This theory is related to the study in the sense that most female Mass Communication students, who belong to the same social cognitive in the society, could develop a negative

attitude as regards to journalism practice. This could be due to discriminations from the society and their family, this leads to the development of the same “social cogitative” or same way of thinking, leading them to respond in the same manner of not accepting journalism as a career. Elaborating on this issue, Ali (2010) submits that:

the issue here is that the way women are portrayed when they are seen practicing journalism determines to a large extent how the public will perceive such an individual. The Nature of Journalism tends to possess questioning challenges that influence people's construction of reality. This is why women's participation as journalists should be an issue of grave concern to both experts in media organizations, Higher Institutions, the society at large, and in our individual families in order to encourage them in the practice of their profession. Because of the way our society, cultures, and families portray women who practice journalism, the female journalist students who can also be referred to as members of a particular social cognitive will leave their journalism career for other jobs and respond to it roughly equal ways.

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of survey method. Survey, according to Nwodu (2006: p. 67) “is a research method, which focuses on a representative sample derived from the entire population of study”. 125 female mass communication students were randomly selected from the total population of 202 female students; 43 girls in 100 level, 25 girls in 200 level, 30 girls in 300 level and 27 in 400 level. Sets of questionnaire were employed as the instrument for data collection. Data collected was descriptively analyzed using SPSS version 22 with reference to devices such as, pie charts, frequency counts, and percentages.

Presentation and analysis of data

125 questionnaires were distributed and 100 was duly filled and retrieved given a response rate of 96% and a rejection rate of 4%. This implies that there is high response rate.

Research Question one: What is the perception of female mass communication students towards journalism as a career?

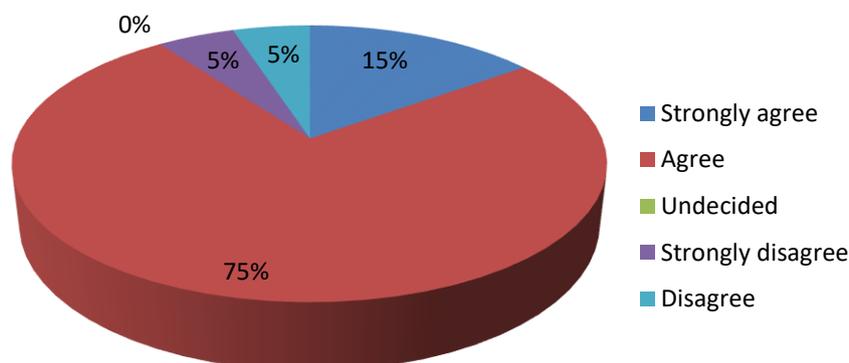


Fig. 1. Journalism is a good profession for women

Figure 1 above seeks to find out female mass communication students, Taraba State University's perception towards journalism as a career for women. 5(5%) disagree that journalism as a career is good for women, 15 (15%) strongly agreed that journalism is a good profession for women, 75(75%) agreed that journalism as a career is good for women. 5 (5%) strongly disagree that journalism as a career is good for women. This implies that most of the respondents agree that journalism as a career is good for women.

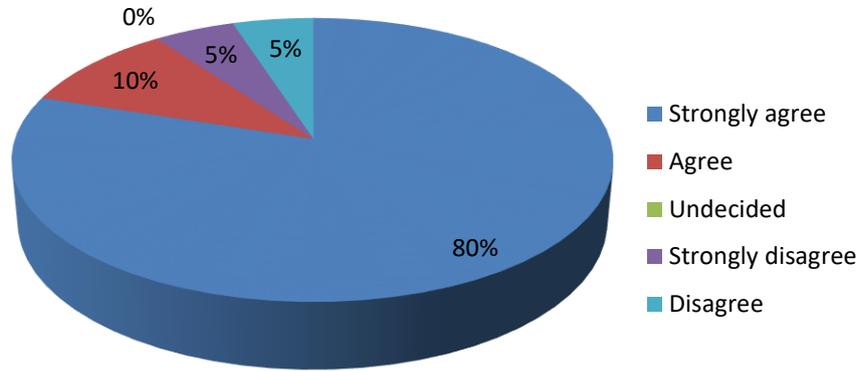


Fig. 2. There is high discrimination against the female Journalists.

Figure two above revealed respondents' perception as to whether there is discrimination against the female journalists. 80 (80%) out of the 100 respondents strongly agreed that there is high discrimination against the female journalists. 10 (10%) agreed to the same assertion, whereas 5 (5%) disagreed that there is high discrimination against the female journalist and 5 (5%) remained undecided.

Research question two: What career option(s) in journalism appeal to the female students of Mass Communication, Taraba State University?

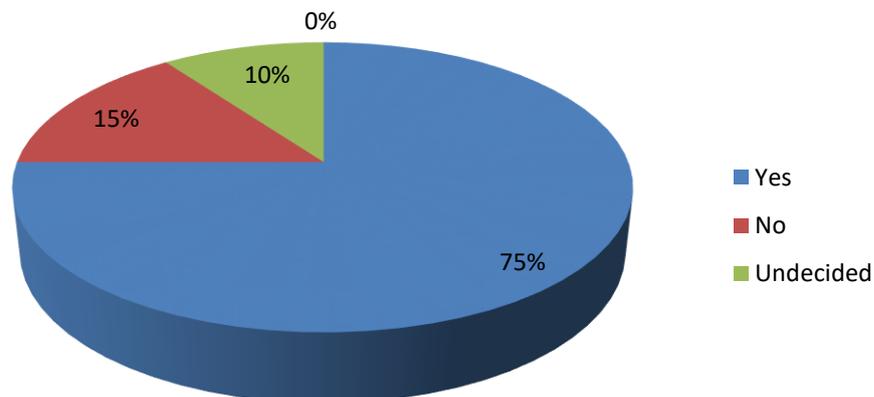


Fig. 3a. Respondents Interest in Journalism: Do you have interest in Journalism practice

Figure 3a above shows that 75 (75%) of female mass communication students of Taraba state University have interest on journalism practice, while 15 (15%) do not have interest in Journalism practice, whereas, 10 (10%) respondents remained undecided as to whether they are interested in taking up journalism as a career or not. This implies that most of the female mass communication students of Taraba state university wish to take up journalism as a career upon graduation. The question is what aspect of journalism would they prefer to venture into.

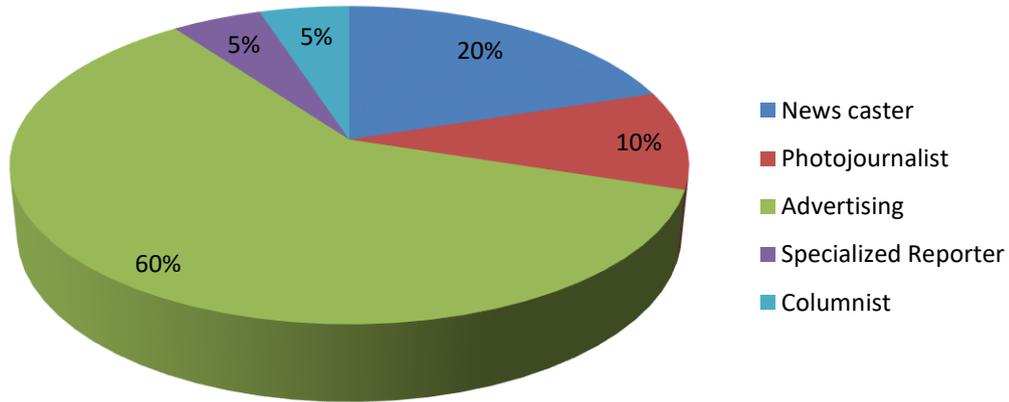


Fig. 3b. What aspect of Journalism would you prefer to go into after graduation?

Figure 3b above shows that 20 (20%) of the respondents would opt for news casting after graduation, 60 (60%) would prefer to go into advertising upon graduation, 5 (5%) would prefer to be columnist, 5 (5%) would prefer to be a specialized reporter upon graduation while 10 (10%) would prefer to be a photojournalist. This implies that female mass communication students of Taraba State University would prefer to opt for advertising and news casting as a career rather than any other aspect of journalism practice.

Research question 3: What are the factors that affect career consideration of female mass communication students towards journalism?

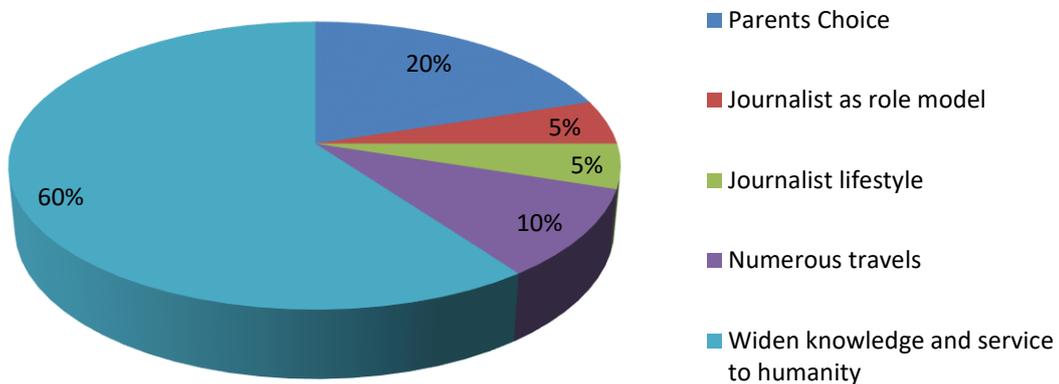


Figure 4. What are the factors that inform your decision to pick journalism as a career.

Figure 4 above shows that 20(20%) of the respondents will opt for journalism as a career because that is what their parents want, 5 (5%) of the respondents will opt for journalism as a career because they see other journalists as a role model and wants to imitate or emulate such journalist. 10 (10%) of the respondents would like to be a journalist because of the numerous travels involve in it, while 60(60%) of the respondents would take journalism as a career because of the wider knowledge journalist acquire over time as well as service to humanity. As far as these sets of respondents are concerned, journalism as a career broadens the horizon of a person and puts him/her in a position of service which is humanitarian in nature. This implies that, most of the respondents would go for journalism because it increases knowledge as well as it is service to humanity.

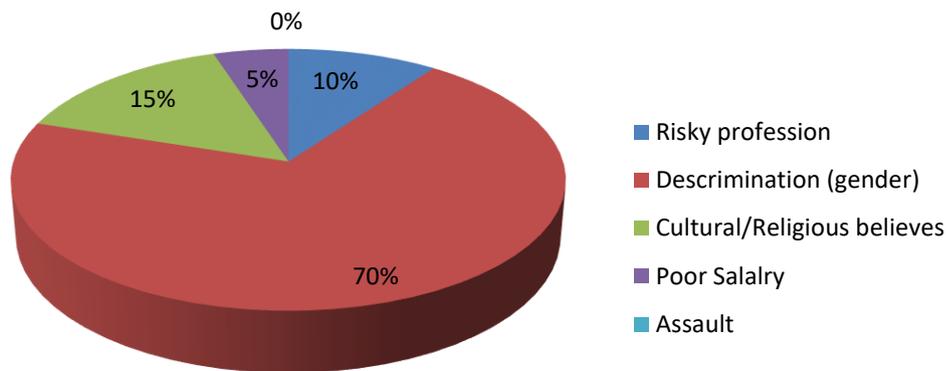


Fig. 5. What are the factors that could make you not take Journalism as a career?

Figure five above shows factors that could discourage female students from taking journalism as a career. 10 (10%) of the respondents believe that journalism is a risky profession, 70 (70%) are discouraged by the fact that there is high discrimination in the practice of journalism, 15 (15%) agreed that cultural/religious believes could affect their decision of taking journalism as a career. Whereas, 5 (5%) believe that journalist are not well paid and this could discourage them from going into journalism practice. This implies that most of the respondents believe that gender discrimination plays a big role in discouraging female students who study mass communication to practice journalism. This implies that discrimination against the female gender as well as religion/cultural believe are the major factors that discourages female students of mass communication from practicing journalism

DISCUSSIONS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

After careful presentation and analysis of data gathered from the respondents, the study submits the following findings:

The majority of the respondents 75 (75%) agreed that journalism is a good profession for women. This is in line with Ememyeonu (1991) study that discovered that most female students consider journalism to be a profession as much suited for women as for men. This is also supported by Patricia et al (2015) study which was carried out to find out the perception of female students of Mass Communication on the career opportunities for the female

journalist in Nigeria, the findings revealed that majority (63%) of the respondents perceive Journalism to be a good profession for women.

In contrary, Ali (2010) carried out a similar study that focused on the attitude of female Mass Communication Students towards journalism as a career. The study revealed that, female mass communication students have negative attitude towards journalism as a career. Findings of this study also revealed that there is high discrimination against the female journalist. The respondents were of the opinion that women are being marginalized when it comes to journalism practice

Findings further show that 75 (75%) of the respondents have an interest in journalism practice and would opt for a career in journalism upon graduation. This finding is in harmony with Patricia et al (2015) research which was carried out to find out the perception of female students of Mass Communication on the career opportunities for the female journalist in Nigeria. Their findings revealed that majority (63%) of the respondents perceive Journalism to be a good profession for women, and 58% would positively consider a career in journalism, especially in the area of photojournalism.

Exploring the aspect of journalism respondents would like to practice, the study revealed that 60 (60%) would prefer to go into advertising while 20 (20%) would prefer news casting. This implies that majority of the respondents would go into advert and news casting as against reporting. These findings are related to Ememyeonu (1991) who studied factors that motivate Nigerian female students at the tertiary level to take up journalism training. He found that female students would prefer more glamorous roles in television, radio, public relations or advertising to aspects of journalism such as reporting.

The findings of this study also revealed that widening of knowledge, as well as service to humanity, is one of the factors that inform the decision of the respondents; female mass communication students of Taraba state University to take up journalism as a career upon graduation.

Explicating the factors that could dissuade them from taking journalism as a career the study unveiled that gender discrimination and risk involve in the practice of journalism play huge role in discouraging women from the practice of journalism. As far as these crops of students are, gender discrimination discourages them from the practice of journalism upon graduation. Ferri and Keller (1986) sampled 136 female, full-time news anchors in commercial television stations. A majority of their respondents stressed the over-emphasis on physical appearance as a barrier. One of the respondents complained that people always asked her male co-anchor about the latest 'hot' story while they asked her about her clothes. Another barrier identified was the problem of overcoming stereotypical attitudes about women's appropriate roles in society. One of the anchors reported having once had a woman call up to say: 'Don't say goodnight, that's a man's job.' Another anchor complained: 'My co-anchor (male) has a beer with local police, trying to make contacts or pick up some information. But when I do that, the officers are suspicious and make comments about me staying out late.'

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

This study examined the career consideration of female mass communication students of Taraba State University. The objective was to ascertain the perception of the female students as to journalism as a career as well as determine the aspect of journalism they would like to go into upon graduation. The findings of this study revealed that most female mass communication students would opt for a career in journalism; especially in the area of advertising and news casting. These students are interested in the profession because it would

afford them the opportunity to acquire wider and diversified knowledge as well as serve humanity. The study also revealed that gender discrimination discourages female mass communication students from the practice of journalism upon graduation.

Recommendations

Having explicated the factors that inform decision making of female mass communication students as to career consideration in journalism the study recommends among other things that:

- (i) Families, religions, cultures and the society at large should desist from the discriminations against female or women; this will revolutionize the notion of the society to see the female journalists as important as their male counterparts.
- (ii) Media houses should strike a balance when it comes to male and female employment; they should employ the female journalists just like they employ the male journalists most especially in the investigative aspects.
- (iii) Institutions of learning should imbibe on female journalism students on the need to take up journalism as a career upon graduation; i.e the benefits of taking of journalism as a career by female students should be highly encouraged by such institutions.

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