

## Assessing the Challenges Confronting Female Journalists in Plateau State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Nigerian women are confronted with gender-based discriminations in all spheres of life and women journalists are not excluded. This study aims to assess some of the challenges confronting women journalists working in Plateau State and the measures taken by the Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) in assisting its members to surmount the challenges confronting them in the course of discharging their duties and responsibilities. The study is anchored on Muted Group Theory. It adopted survey research design. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection from 92 registered female journalists in Plateau State. The study found that women journalists face myriads of challenges, including sexual advances, assignment to dry beats, gender insensitive policies, family responsibilities, job security, as well as cultural and religious limitations. Based on the findings of this study, it recommends that media organisations should stop the gender stereotyping against women journalists and help them to surmount some of the challenges confronting them by allowing them to cover all types of beats. It concluded that women should be assigned responsibilities which not based on their gender as women but as professionals. In order for the potentials of female journalists to be felt in the society, media organisations must give women equal opportunity as their male colleagues in the media industry.

**Keywords:** Female journalists, Gender, NAWOJ, Discrimination, Equality

### Introduction

Journalism has emerged as a gripping realm in media, and the journalists act as an intermediary between the people and the media. The female journalists present a paradox where their presence in news gathering and dissemination is now common place, yet they continue to be different from their male counterparts. Male journalists are largely perceived to be professionals while the females are classified as “gendered”, their roles are characterized by their femininity (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004). According to Amobi (2020), gender advocates have tirelessly laboured to ensure that obligations and commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Beijing World Conference on women are fulfilled and the results are now evident globally, in the light of gender sensitive laws, constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, policies, government structures and resource allocations. Furthermore, the media industry was not excluded from agitations for equal opportunities for women. Traditional African society has assigned different roles to both men and women and as they grow, they perform those roles the society requires of them. Mattelart (1986) opines that the definition of masculine and feminine qualities in division of labour finds its bearing and are thereby transmitted, re-articulated and reinforced in different fabrics of society. This was because women were then programmed to bear children and nurse them to maturity.

In African traditional religion, women were considered inferior to men, so not expected to talk in public. Women were seen as mere helpers and as such they could not function on equal rank with men. Backed by a patriarchal system of functioning, opinions of a woman’s purpose, expectations and ability are deep rooted, clearly defining what they expect of themselves and what society expects of them as well.

However, the perceptions of women as mere objects of pleasure and domestic workers have changed over time. Chambers, Kapoor, Newmen, Cocharn, & Brown (2004) opined that the role of a woman which was said to be in the kitchen has begun to take a new dimension in the face of the society’s economic downturn that gave rise

to the need for women to support their husbands. Consequently, they began to see the need to assume different positions as their male counterparts in all disciplines not to compete with men, but to encourage women to take up various areas of study including journalism.

Bresslauer (2022) hints that historically, journalism was seen as male profession because of the tasking nature of the profession. This is evident in the salutation phrase of journalists as gentlemen of the press. It remained a man's job for years. The rigors associated with news gathering and processing, working odd hours and the hazards associated with journalism profession further compounded matters.

However, the increasing global agitation for gender equality and empowerment in all sectors led to changes in gender role in journalism practice as more women-oriented stories started appearing in Nigeria newspapers of the early 50's. With the establishment of the Nigerian Daily Times, when lively feature articles began to appear with boxed title-heads. Women journalists in the 1950's were restricted mainly to women and domestic issues.

Sometimes, they had to write under pseudonyms to hide their identity mainly because of the prevailing social and cultural milieu of that period. Ani (2004) recalled that women constitute the group at the bottom of the ladder in respect to employment, training and status in society. And the sad part is that women accepted this notion almost as a God-given role but women later launched an invasion into areas of broadcast and print journalism, once regarded as men's preserves. To buttress this point Anorve, (2012), Gray & Hessel, (2014) add that with the changing times women are now agitating for not just inclusion but for equal representation in different capacities as professionals in journalism. The early efforts of women pioneer journalists in Nigeria to carve a niche for themselves, provide a platform for more women to be accepted/respected by their male counterparts as well as a progressive rise in the numerical and leadership representation of women in the Nigerian print/broadcast media led to the establishment of Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) in 1990.

It has become a universal ideal that women should have an equitable access to and control of all the sensitive sectors of human endeavours, including the mass media. However, the issue of gender imbalance still remains acute in Nigeria. Female journalists face the glass ceiling phenomenon. According to Safa & Akter (2015), the female journalists have recognised varying degrees of stereotypical attitudes, harassment by male counterparts. Women are hardly ever assigned to strong political, investigative stories, for example covering the president or parliament. Most male editors have the stereotypical idea that women have a limited intellectual capacity, therefore assigning them to the "less important" beats like gender violence, health, beauty, and cookery tips. They are treated as dummies that are unable to bring out the news behind the news.

Tijani-Adenle (2020) assert that women's experience of journalism practise has undergone scrutiny both globally and locally while similar themes continue to surface. Ran (2015) reiterated that female journalists usually do not receive equal opportunity in training and career advancement with their male counterparts, job insecurity, beat assignments increasing violence, maternity leaves, social insurance benefits and editorial positions. This study sought to assess some of the challenges confronting women Journalists in Plateau State and to examine the efforts of NAWOJ in making sure females are not marginalised in the profession.

### **Brief About NAWOJ Intervention**

The Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) was established about 33 years. According to (Anyanwu, 2017), NAWOJ was established with the aim of increasing women's access and leadership in the media industry in Nigeria. NAWOJ seeks to protect the rights of female journalists and defend them in the cases of sexual and physical abuses both at home and in the course of discharging their duties and responsibilities.

Anyanwu (2017) hints that in addition to defending the rights of members, the association also trained members to meet up with the expectations in the media world such as new media and other opportunities that would help them in their career. NAWOJ also intervenes in media houses when it gets complaints from its members and four of other executives agreed to this. NAWOJ holds monthly meetings where women journalists come together to share ideas and discuss the problems they encounter in their offices. The meetings serve as an avenue of interaction and solidarity for female journalists as other members agree in respect of the monthly meetings.

While summarising the role of NAWOJ in defending the rights of its members, Bresslauer, (2022:3) asserts that:

It's not just about fighting for their rights; it's also about ensuring that they are the best in their profession. When you are good, the media organization would be unable to put you aside since they know you are up to the task. We emphasize that women should not believe they are only cut out for the health or education or fashion or beauty beat. There is no beat you cannot cover. The most important thing is being the best at what you do. NAWOJ makes sure that women journalist can attain the peak whenever they find themselves.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Women face varying degrees of discrimination in almost all spheres of the society including the media sector on account of their gender. These diverse challenges are in forms of sexual harassment, family roles, discrimination among news sources, and these challenges are encountered basically not because of the performance but for the fact that they are women (Chika, 2018). The traditional society believed public life was strictly male affairs while women are restricted to child bearing, upbringing of the children, cooking and cleaning the environment (Sanusi & Adelabu, 2015). Initially, the traditional society perceptions of women as mere objects of sexual pleasure and lack of opportunities for women in most institutions, organisations to either work or acquire education like their male counterparts, has impeded women's career progression (Agbaje, 2020 & Nwafor, 2013). When women acquired education and exposure, they started developing interest and venturing into journalism and other professions perceived as men-profession. The crux of this study is to assess challenges confronting female journalists in Plateau State, Nigeria.

### **Research Objectives**

The study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- i. Ascertain whether women Journalists in Plateau State are discriminated against or not.
- ii. Identify the challenges confronting female journalists in Plateau State.
- iii. Determine the level of effectiveness of NAWOJ in defending female journalists in Plateau State.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following questions:

- i. Why are women journalists discriminated against in Plateau State?
- ii. What are some of the challenges confronting female journalists in Plateau State?
- iii. What is the level of effectiveness of NAWOJ in defending female journalists in Plateau State?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Gender Equality and Media**

Ogujiofor (2015) describes gender equality as "equality under the law, equality of opportunity including rewards for work, access to human, financial and other productive resources that enable opportunity and equality of voice to influence and contribute to the development process". Gender equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal their personal

abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Okoye (2000) says gender equality means the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men have to be considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean men and women have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

While explaining further, Arpa, Ogunsanya and Acheme (2020) opines that gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. Nigeria like any African society is patriarchal. Though, the level of patriarchy may differ in relative terms from one Nigerian community to another, all modern public and private institutions in the country are infused with this patriarchal culture. This has been as a result of both the traditional system and colonial experience. Gender discrimination, sexual exploitation and the denial of life's opportunities to women are being presented as part of this culture that should be preserved. Gender inequality is as a result of unjust, economic, political and social relations.

### **Gender Inequality in Media Industry**

The term gender inequality or discrimination simply means, favouring or placing one over the other. Bowman (2014) described the media as the mirror of the society which implies that it should reflect a just and fair society where both male and female are treated equally and fairly without form of discrimination. However, the Nigerian media industry discriminate women even in terms of employment opportunities and even when the women are employed, they are not posted to certain beats because of their gender.

The fact that gender equality is a fundamental human right which is all about equal treatment of men and women, and encompasses issues such as equal pay for equal work, equal access to decision making bodies, employment, pensions, health care, promotions, maternity and paternity leave. In journalism, Fundamental Human Right also means fair gender portrayal in the news, the use of neutral and non-gender specific language, and women not being pigeonholed as 'lifestyle' or 'soft' news reporters (Ogundipe, 2005).

Unarguably, the media has the potential of altering significantly people's perception of the world around them in addition to shaping their opinions and attitudes. Therefore, the task to shape gender realities by changing public opinion and attitude towards the existing gender misconceptions lie more with the mass media than any other institution in the society. It is not in doubt that the media has the power to make and unmake the image of women, to hasten or retard the progress of women in society, cannot be denied or underestimated.

According to Ramtohul (2020) since the 1980's, the roles of African women have been undergoing a fundamental change to increased participation in the political, social and economic sectors of society, the tendency of the media have been to ignore or distort these significant events. In fact, in the first United Nations' document recognizing the media as a "critical area of concern" for women, the media are listed as one of the ten major obstacles to women's advancement.

Regrettably, the media portray women and the issues affecting them in a manner that is predominantly negative and "special" as though women are not part of normal society. The power of a significant number of women in the media, occupying top decision-making positions is a crucial factor in helping to combat the difficulties that women face, either in media content or portrayal of women. This can only work though, if operated in tandem with conscientizing women and men into questioning and challenging traditional norms and practices.

Franks (2013) claims that there is a gap between male and female journalists and found that there has been a great disparity in the way male journalists are paid in comparison to what the females get all over the world. This is because journalism has been observed to be organized based on masculine values notwithstanding the

rise in the number of women entering the field Ross, (2001), Melin, (2008) and Löfgren (2010), found that women journalists were discouraged because after graduation, they do not get jobs as their male counterparts do and if they do, they find it difficult if not impossible to rise through the ranks to higher positions and consequently do not get the required representation they desire in the industry.

Female journalists are aspiring to improve their status and resist the culture of stereotype which has been the bane of the industry, by embracing areas that had been traditionally occupied by the male, such as hard news, crime and politics. Despite this effort, only a few of them have risen to the peak of the profession in Nigeria (Sanusi & Adelabu, 2015). Franks (2013) claims that female journalists are more unlikely than men to achieve more senior and well-paid positions; women who do secure jobs at a senior level in journalism are more likely than men to be childless.

While introducing a fresh perspective to discrimination against female journalists in Nigeria, Bresslauer (2022:6) says:

Online harassment has been a growing concern and the discriminatory culture present within society has led to increased online attacks against women journalists. As women, we face gender-based discrimination while carrying out our journalistic duties. Some media companies don't employ women because they consider them incompetent compared to men. A recent study conducted by one of the daily newspapers showed that women face discrimination at work as a consequence of their marital status, too. There is the idea that women have no time to carry out their professional duties because they have to take care of their family, even though this is not the case for many women. Women are often asked to resign or get fired when they get pregnant.

### **Challenges Confronting Female Journalists**

Nigerian women in the media industry at various cadres be it managerial or employee levels increasingly encounter a lot of challenges which discourages a lot of them. Initially, journalism was seen as a male-dominated profession, women who venture into the profession were confronted with myriad of challenges ranging from religious and cultural limitations that made the notion of inequality a natural concept existing between the male and female genders (Lachover, 2005).

However, the path of women's entry into journalism was not a steady one as women struggled to survive in the industry despite many obstacles. In 1932, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) introduced an official marriage bar which impeded women's progress as they were obliged to resign from the corporation after marriage (Murphy, 2011) whereas men still retained their jobs and positions.

Njoku, Dike & Vincent (2018) revealed that there are varying degrees of gender discrimination which has been attributed to diverse causes which are attributed to culture and attitude of men towards competition with women. Therefore, gender discrimination is an inhibiting factor to the development of the journalism profession.

In Nigeria, the representation of women in media has been the centre of attention in recent times in media studies (Oyinade, Daramola, Lamidi, 2013). Some of these studies, however, investigated how women are seen by those who set the media agenda because the way women are treated can be traced to the issue of subordination of women by those who hold the control of mass media. Thus, in Nigeria and some parts of the world, the profession is mostly dominated by male. Women who remain in the industry have to fight for recognition, respect, equal opportunity and credibility. However, the abuse and harassment are not limited to a certain period in their career but start from when these women apply for job positions in the industry and

continue as they move up in their job positions as journalists (Williams, 2015). Some other challenges are violence of a sexual nature and threat against their families, lack of prospects like their male colleagues in addition to unfriendly maternity conditions and marriage. Most female journalists are single mothers; this is not because they do not want to keep their marriage but because of spouses who lack understanding of what journalism entails (Anyanwu, 2017).

However, in a war and insurgent country, women are exposed to greater risks where attacks to lives and properties are imminent. Stories that involve night club happenings, late night meetings by politicians or government officials, drug related issues, sexual reports, among others, are seen not to be within the 'jurisdiction' of a woman journalist duty since tradition and religion forbid such areas for them. Journalism is considered a dangerous job for women especially in a violent, hostile, corrupt environment and most especially for reporters who expose injustice in violent, environment and war zones (Ronderos, 2012).

In addition, other obstacles that pose as threats to female journalists are sexual violence, and most female journalists who have been sexually assaulted preferred to remain quiet because of tradition and stigmatization that is associated with the act. Some of the female journalists were framed for being part of terrorism groups, corruption and other charges. Ronderos (2012) reported cases of female journalists: one was Reeyot Alemu who was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment in September 2011 for alleged involvement in terrorist acts but she was later cleared of the allegations levelled against her.

Another case was that of Khadija Ismayiova, a reporter with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Azerbaijani service, who was framed up because she exposed corruption and power abuse at the highest levels in Azerbaijan. In May 2012, she received a threat letter which included photographs from surveillance cameras installed in her apartment in order to denigrate her. Despite these threats of defamation, Ismayilova refused to stop working. Also, is the murder of the *Sunday Times* award winning American correspondent Marie Colvin who was covering the siege of Homs in Syria among many other ugly stories.

### **Empirical Review**

Chika (2018) in a study aimed at describing the challenges confronting female journalists in Enugu State, Nigeria, a total of 35 female journalists with the mean age of 28 years and 5-15 years of experience were interviewed, anchored on the social identity theory, results revealed that the challenges confronting female journalists include: discrimination from news sources and colleagues at work, sexual harassments, and family roles, based on this the study concludes that women journalists are confronted with career related challenges not because of their performance on the job but because of the fact they are women. Ogundoyin (2020) in a related study titled "Journalism as a profession: the challenges of women in a discriminatory society", sought to investigate the challenges faced by women journalists in the Nigerian media space anchored on feminists muted group theory. The study employed survey research and data collected via interview to sample 120 women journalists in some Nigerian media outfits. The study revealed that women journalists face myriads of challenges, including abuse, sexual harassment, marital issues such as divorce and spending inadequate time with spouse and children. In addition, some women are restricted to anchoring less challenging programmes compared to their male counter parts in the industry. The study recommends that media stations should look beyond the sexual stereotyping and assist women journalists to overcome the different challenges they are faced with to enable them attain enviable heights in the profession.

Jibril & Abubakar (2017) examined public perception of female journalists in North-East, Nigeria, examined gendered conception of journalistic roles as perceived by the public in north-east Nigeria, as well as the perception of the public on female journalists. Anchored on perception theory, the study employed survey research method, purposively selecting 300 respondents in the capital cities of Taraba and Borno states (Jalingo and Maiduguri). The demographics cut across educational qualifications, sex, age and culture. Findings revealed that while the respondents have a positive perception towards female journalists and think that female journalists

have roles to play in journalism profession, this means that their perception were neither influenced by gender nor religious or cultural values.

Ibrahim & Spinkin (2021) investigated Female journalists and safety challenges in selected media organisations in Kano State, Nigeria. The study examined safety challenges faced by female journalists in selected media organisations in Kano State, Nigeria. It employed focus group discussion and in-depth interview to collect data. Four sessions were held with eight female journalists. The study is hinged on spiral of silence theory. Results showed how female journalists keep mute about the challenges they face in carrying out their duties, it adds that majority of the participants had experienced threats, attacks, harassments, marginalization and discrimination. In addition, most media organisations do not have laid down safety policies except for a few safety measures when the need arises.

Ibrahim, Abba-Aji, Adamu & Vi (2021) in a recent study titled, "Safety of women journalists in Nigerian news media: exposing the hindered gender-based discrimination", investigated experiences of Nigerian women journalists to identify the typology of gender based discriminations and coping strategy affecting women journalists in a male dominated industry. The study utilized a semi structured interview approach with 37 participants (25 women journalists, ten male journalists and two human resource managers) were interviewed from 12 broadcast media organisations in northern Nigeria. Findings showed that Nigerian women journalists experience different types of gendered unsafety including discrimination in newsgathering, production and sexual harassment; most of the affected women used risky coping strategies such as ignoring; most media organisations lack the policies and framework of action.

Dwifatma (2021) in a study on barriers to career advancement of female journalists in Indonesia, the study maps the proportion of female and male journalists in ten Indonesian mass media organisations, the research applied quantitative and qualitative method involving 10 media(n=811) at both managerial and reporter levels and focused group discussion with 14 female editors. Results show that at the managerial level there are 64% male and 36% female journalists. The study identified three factors that hinder the career of female journalists as a double burden (career and household), mental barriers and 'masculine' office politics.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on muted group theory (MGT).The theory was propounded by Shirley and Edwin Ardener in 1975. It is a communication theory that focuses on how marginalised groups such as women, lesbians, gays, colored skin people, etc. are muted and excluded. MGT suggested that in every society, a social hierarchy exists, that privileges some groups over others.

Wall and Gannon-Leary (1999) said MGT was mainly developed as a feminist theory and it upholds a gender perspective where the male is the dominant class. The women live with the attitude where her opinions remain muted when spoken and mostly choose to adapt with the situation. The attitudes of the male who are the bread winners are considered dominant than the women who rely on them. The age-old tradition made a whole new power division in the society. It further explains why women have difficulty being accepted in and becoming part of an organization whose rules have been constructed primarily by a male-dominated world.

According to Kothari, (2001), the theory believes that men are the cause of women's muteness because they do not want to understand any language but the one created and constructed by them. They do not want to acknowledge that there is a woman's language as they would be compelled to lose some of their power to women.

However, in Nigeria, men control the various avenues of expression such as media outlets, such as newspaper organizations, broadcast houses the home video industry, the government and other institutions and therefore the

ways laws and rules are written and the words that are used to describe the culture (newspapers, movies, etc.). This is because they control the production and packaging of these products; they determine the styles of expression, staff distribution and assignment of roles and to sustain supremacy they assign to themselves the more paying, more powerful and prestigious roles while leaving the weaker and less prestigious ones to women.

While giving further insight into the theory, Wall and Gannon-Leary (1999) said as children both males and females are conditioned to perform according to their biological expectations in their adult lives. Since men grow up believing that it is their duty to take care of their families through monetary contributions while women provide care, they take the bigger jobs that will yield better financial rewards. MGT essentially challenges traditionally accepted paradigmatic assumptions and explains why some societies have found it difficult to embrace the shifts in paradigms which are sweeping across the rest of the world.

MGT validates and explains the experiences and perceptions of women and helps us to understand power and its structure and how it is used against people. The theory explains why women are misrepresented in many spheres of the society and stereotyped as vague and flowery in cartoons and underrepresented in the workplace. The theory is suitable for this study because Nigerian women in the media industry are muted as they are underrepresented in all cadres; the theory gives an insight into the reasons for the imbalance in the media industry.

**Research Methodology**

This study adopted quantitative research approach. The research design for this study was survey method. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Items from the questionnaire were drawn from the research questions. This was to enable respondents give accurate responses to the research questions. The population of the study are 92 registered NUJ Women/Female Journalists practicing in Plateau State. The study utilized a total census/enumeration method, because the total number of the registered female journalists are 92 and all the journalists across TV and Radio stations in Plateau State responded. A total of 92 copies of questionnaire were distributed, returned and valid for analysis. The data collected was analysed and presented below in tables using simple percentage for easy understanding.

$$\frac{NR}{TR} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where NR =Number of respondents

TR = Total number of response

100 = is the percentage

1 = is constant

**Date Presentation and Analysis**

**Table 1: Demographic Data**

<b>Demographic data</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
20-31	28	30.4
31-41	54	58.7
41 -51	7	7.6
51 and above	3	3,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Female	92	100
Female	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Educational Qualifications</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Diploma	13	14.1

B.A./B.Sc.	52	56.2
M.A./M.Sc.	27	29.3
PhD	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	25	27.2
Single	56	60.9
Devoiced	11	11.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Media Genre</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Print	29	31.5
Broadcast	54	58.1
New Media	9	9.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: 2022 Field Survey*

Analysis of data in table 1 shows the demographic information; age range, gender, educational qualifications and media genre of the respondents. The table shows that those between the ages of 31-41 constitutes majority of the sample population with 54 (58.7%) followed by those between the ages of 20-31 with 28 (30.4%) while those between ages of 41-51 and 51 and above ages constituted 7 (7.6%) and 3 (3.35%) respectively. On the gender distribution of the respondents, the table shows that female Journalists who purposively selected constitutes 92 (100%) while on the educational qualifications of the respondents, the table shows that those with B.A./B.Sc. constitutes majority of the sampled population with 52 (56.2%) followed by those with M.A./M.Sc. constituting 27 (29.3%) while those with Diploma certificates constitutes the minority of the population with 13 (14.1%). The table further reveals the marital status of the respondents as follows; singles constituted majority of the population with a total of 56 (60.9%) followed by the married those constitutes 25 (27.2%) while the devoiced constitutes 11 (11.9%). on the media genre that the respondents work with, the table shows that those working with the broadcast media constitutes majority of the study population with 54 (58.1%) followed by those working for print media with 29 (31.5%) while those working for new media constitutes the minority of the study population with 9 (9.8%).

**Table 2: Responses to the existence of discrimination against women in media industry**

<b>Existence of gender discrimination against female Journalists</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	92	100
No	0	0.0
<b>Identify ways that women are discriminated in the media industry.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hardly assigned to strong beats	52	56.2
Assigned to women/Gender Desk	27	29.3
Hardly posted out for special assignments	13	14.1
<b>To what extent are women discriminated against in the media industry?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very High	76	82.6
High	16	17.4
Very Low	0	0.0
Low	0	0.0

**Source: 2022 Field Survey**

Analysis of Table 2 reveals that the entire study population who are women journalists admitted that they are discriminated against in the media industry while on the ways that women are discriminated against in the industry, 52 (56.2 %) revealed that women journalists are hardly assigned to beats that are considered difficult including the juicy beats, 27 (29.3 %) assert that women are mostly assigned to women/gender desks and beats while 13 (14.1%) are of the view that women journalists are hardly posted out for general assignments. The implication is that women face discrimination in the media industry on account of their gender while their male counterparts continue to dominate the industry.

**Table 3: Responses to some of the challenges that women journalists are facing in Plateau State**

<b>Do you agree that women Journalists face some challenges that impeded their performance in the media industry?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	92	100
No	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>In what ways are women Journalists are challenged in the course of carrying out duties?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Sexual assaults	13	14.1
Combining family responsibilities with their job	25	27.2
Lack of quality time with spouses	7	7.6
Denial of promotion/elevation to top positions	7	7.6
Cultural and religious factor	40	43.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>What is the level of challenges women Journalists face?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very High	92	100
High	0	0.0
Very Low	0	0.0
Low	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: 2022 Field Survey**

Analysis of Table 3 shows that 92 representing 100% of the study population who were purposively selected admitted that women journalists are facing series of challenges in the media industry as 7 (7.6 %) identified denial of promotion or elevation to the top positions in the media industry as one of the challenges the female journalists are facing in the industry, 40 (43.4%) identified cultural and religious factor as one of the challenges that is impeding women journalists in the state from effectively discharging duties, 25 (27.2%) identified combining family responsibilities such as cooking, washing clothes and other domestic works with their journalism job as one of the challenges they are facing in the industry, 13 (14.1%) said women journalists faced sexual assaults in the course of the work while 7 (7.6%) indicated that lack of quality time with their spouses is one of the challenges there are facing in the media industry as they hardly have time for their spouses. On the level of demoralisation in the job occasioned by the some of the challenges they are facing in the job, 92 (100%) who were purposively selected rated the level of the demoralization as very high.

The implication is that women journalists are facing myriad of challenges in the media industry and some of the challenges range from sexual assaults, lack of quality time with spouses, combining the job with their domestic

works as career-married women and even denial of promotion or elevation to the position to the top positions such as editors or managers in the industry.

**Table 3: Responses to NAWOJ efforts in defending Female Journalists**

<b>The role of NAWOJ in defending Women Journalists in Plateau State</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Advocacy visits to media outfits	29	31.5
Taking legal actions in cases of sexual harassment of members	41	44.6
Sourcing for training opportunities for members	9	9.8
Reviewing members' challenges via platform	13	14.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Level of effectiveness NAWOJ in defending its members</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Highly Effective	76	82.6
Effective	16	17.4
Highly Ineffective	0	0.0
Ineffective	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: 2022 Field Survey*

Analysis of table 4 reveals that 29 (31.5%) are of the view that NAWOJ has embarked on advocacy visits to several media organisations to advocate for equal treatment and opportunity for women journalists, 4 (44.6%) indicated that in of cases of sexual assaults and general harassment of women journalists, in cases of sexual harassment of members, NAWOJ has instituted legal actions against the perpetrators, 9 (9.8%) said NAWOJ search for training opportunities for its members to empower them to be at par with their male colleagues in the office while 13 (14.1%) revealed that NAWOJ holds monthly meeting where members are given the opportunity to share their challenges in their various offices and solutions are often provided and some decisions are taken defending the level of seriousness of the problem.

On the level of effectiveness of NAWOJ in defending its and taking care of their welfare, 76 (82.6%) constituting majority of the study population rated the performance of the NAWOJ in defending its members as highly effective while 16 (17.4%) rated the association performance in the same regard as effective. The implication is that NAWOJ is doing extremely well in catering for the welfare of its members and rated as highly effective in defending the rights of its members which was the main purpose of establishing the association.

**Discussion of findings**

Three research questions were posed to guide the study. The questionnaires were drawn from the research questions. The data obtained from the respondents are represented in the four (4) tables above. From the data that the researcher provided the answers to the research questions in relation to the theory and relevant pieces of literature used for this study.

**Research Objective One:** To ascertain whether women Journalists in Plateau State are discriminated against or not. Table two above was used to achieve this. It shows that women journalists are being discriminated against and the discriminations come in different forms. Out of 92 respondents, 52 (56.2 %) affirmed that women journalists are hardly assigned to some beats that are considered difficult including the juicy beats, 27 (29.3 %) says women are mostly assigned to women/gender desks and beats while 13 (14.1%) are of the view that women journalists are hardly posted out for general assignments. On the extent of the discrimination affecting the

women journalists, 92 (100%) rated the extent of the discrimination as very high. This is in line with Franks (2013) opines that the media outfits had discriminatory policies which discouraged women from discharging their duties as journalists. One of such policies was suppressing female wages and setting a limit to the number of female journalists under training, sexualized harassment, take fewer opinions and deliberately excluded women from occupying managerial positions.

The implication is that women journalists are discriminated against in the media outfits that work. Some of the areas that women journalists are discriminated against are that they are hardly assigned to strong beats, merely assigned to women/gender desk and are hardly posted out for special assignments.

Research Objective Two: To identify some of the challenges confronting female journalists in Plateau State. Table three was used to achieve this objective. The table highlighted some of the challenges confronting women journalist in the course of discharging their duties. Out of 92 (100%) of the respondents are of the opinion that women journalists are confronted with a lot of problems which are demoralizing their interest in the profession. Out of 92 (100%), 13 respondents identified sexual assaults, seven respondents identified denial of promotion or elevation to the top positions in the media industry, 25 (27.2%) identified combining family responsibilities such as cooking, washing clothes and other domestic works with their journalism job, 7 (7.6%) identified lack of quality time with their spouses and 40 (43.4%) identified cultural and religious factors as some of the factors confronting women journalists in the course of discharging their duties. The implication is that sexual harassment, cultural and religious factor, denying or refusing to elevate women journalists to managerial positions, lack of quality time with spouses and combining family responsibilities with their job are some of the factors impeding the effectiveness of women journalists in Plateau State and Nigeria at large. This is in line with Oyinade, Daramola & Lamidi, (2013) assertion that women journalists are treated as inferior workers by those who control media outfits, traditional culture sees journalism profession as mainly male profession while women who remain in the industry have to fight for recognition, respect, equal opportunity and credibility. Other challenges are sexual harassment, threats by family members, lack of prospects like their male colleagues and unfriendly maternity conditions.

Research Objective Three: To determine the role of NAWOJ defending its members. Table four and Table three was used to achieve this objective. The tables highlighted some of the roles of NAWOJ in defending or protecting the interest of its members. First of all, on the effectiveness of NAWOJ in taking measures aimed at protecting its members, 92 (100%) agreed that NAWOJ has been very efficient in defending its members in Plateau State. The table further shows that 29 (31.5%) affirmed that NAWOJ has embarked on series of advocacy visits to media organisations and advocated for equal treatment and opportunities for its members, 41 (44.6%) opines that NAWOJ had instituted legal actions against people who perpetrated sexual assaults and general harassment against its members, 9 (9.8%) agreed that NAWOJ search for training opportunities for its members to empower them to be at par with their male colleagues in the office while 13 (14.1%) reveals that NAWOJ holds monthly meeting where members are given the opportunity to share their challenges in their various offices and solutions are often provided and some decisions are taken defending the level of seriousness of the problem. The implication is that NAWOJ has been taking series of measures towards defending its members and promoting their welfare. This is line with Bresslauer (2022) assertion that omen journalists should demand for posting to other beats apart from health or education or fashion or beauty beats. NAWOJ makes sure that women journalists attain the peak of their career.

## **Conclusion**

This paper concluded that women journalists are seriously being discriminated against in the media industry in Nigeria. This discrimination has created serious imbalance in the industry reflecting in the leadership structure, other cadres and even posting to juicy beats all in favoured of male journalists. These imbalances and discriminations are demoralising a lot of women who choose to remain in the journalism profession despite of

the discriminations because of the passion they have for the job and until these imbalances and discriminations are corrected or stopped very soon women would exit the profession. In addition to correcting the imbalances, equal opportunities should be created for young fresh female graduates with fresh journalism ideas to explore the benefits of the profession by posting them to juicy beats like their male counterparts. The media as the mirror of the society should not be seen promoting discrimination against any segment of the society but rather promote a just and fair society where everybody irrespective of his/her background will have a sense of belonging. The Nigeria NAWOJ has been rated as highly effective in promoting and defending the interest of its member and as such more women journalists should join association to enjoy the protection of the association.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are pertinent:

- i. Media organisations should stop discriminating against female journalists in terms of posting and promotion to management cadre as well as create equal opportunities for young female graduates of mass communication who wish to practice journalism profession.
- ii. Women journalists should not be discouraged by some of the challenges they are confronted with in the media industry but practice journalism excellently by demonstrating high sense of professionalism in the course of discharging their duties as journalists.
- iii. NAWOJ should not relent in fighting for the interest and welfare of its members and collaborate with women lawyers in defending NAWOJ members in any legal matters whether instituted against a member.
- iv. Female journalists who are not yet members of NAWOJ should join the association to enjoy the benefits afforded to members.
- v. Media organisations should assign beats to Journalists not on the basis of gender but competency.

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