

Chapter 16

Newsroom Representation and Discrimination Against Female Journalists in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

In journalism, there are still growing concerns about the ratio of men to women, even though women's presence in the newsroom have increased progressively. The issues of gender stereotyping and discrimination against women have emerged over time and still remain an issue of great concern. In view of this, using the gender theory, this chapter aims to interrogate the issues of female representation in the practice of journalism in Ghana, in terms of numbers, portrayals, and discriminations. To achieve the aim, the study employs a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews. The study reveal that men still dominate the journalism profession in Ghana. Also women in the newsroom are portrayed on one hand as capable and hardworking and on the other hand as emotional and immoral. Furthermore, women in journalism in Ghana are discriminated against in terms of salary structure and job roles. It was also revealed that female journalists in Ghana are employing strategies like apathy and rebelliousness to deal with the negative portrayals and discrimination against them.

INTRODUCTION

Several studies have shown that historically, journalism evolved as a male-dominated field. Journalism today has practically become a feminine profession across the world (Claudia et al., 2018; Byerly, 2013; Djerf-Pierre, 2011). This affirms Gallagher's (1995) seminal work which avers that global trends in journalism show an appreciable number of women have entered and are engaged in the profession. The flooding of women into journalism is a well-studied and discussed phenomenon (Byerly, 2013; Chambers, 2004; de Bruin, 2004; Fahs, 2011; Frolich & Lafky, 2008; Gil, 2007; Hanusch, 2013; North, 2014 & 2009; Steiner, 2007; Tusan, 2005). The International Federation of Journalists' (IFJ) survey carried out in 2001 attests to these upward trends of women into the journalism occupation throughout the world. However, within the Ghanaian context, the literature on this phenomenon remains scant (Gadzekpo, 2009).

Countries like Australia, New Zealand, and the Nordic countries lead the field in percentages of women working in news production and in journalism (de Bruin, 2014 & 2011; Djerf-Pierre, 2011; IFJ, 2001). For Djerf-Pierre (2011), the Scandinavia and Nordic 'success stories' in the attainment of gender equality in journalism has become a challenge and a standard to emulate by most countries. Research has shown that even though there has been an increase of female journalists in the last decades, journalism remains divided along gender lines (De Vuyst, 2019) and in Ghana, this is no exception.

Gender issues play a critical role in every aspect of life in this modern era and journalism is no exception. Therefore one cannot rule out the role gender plays daily in the delivery of the news and the influences that underline the dictates of news and what does not. "Despite the advances made by women in Journalism through the 1900s, Journalism as a field has remained male-dominated. An analysis of the logic of the field suggests, however, that masculinity and power are closely related to the ideas about what constitutes good Journalism that has prevailed in different periods" (Djerf-Pierre, 2007:99).

The media in all its power ought to serve as an agent that should continue to propagate positive images of women through society, but the images media present about women sometimes help to cement the stereotype of women as victims, defenceless groups of physical objects as seen in beauty pageants, and advertising and as sex objects.

Journalism is one of the industries that demand lots of time, dedication, fieldwork activities, and pressures to meet deadlines, to be the first to break news, to produce quality work with rich content is expected. This is why it has been a profession dominated by men (Kabah, 2019). However, in recent years women have filled up this world-of-men industry and with no doubt, have had to battle out their credibility and ability to remain there. There is a solid proposition of the growth of females in the Ghanaian Journalism profession and this occurrence is leading to a decrease in the number of men in Journalism (Boateng 2017). The current situation in Ghana is in line with de Bruin's (2014) findings that there has been an increase in the number of women in journalism in the Scandinavian and Nordic countries. Scholars globally have been in unending debates about gender in journalism. Some narratives have excluded women in the lead stories even though they have been captured in headline stories as compared to men (Tichner, Malson & Fey, 2019). The men and women power relation has always created a gap in many professions. Focusing on this historical angle of unequal power relation between men and women has resulted in the discrimination of women in society. When society defines you as masculine, you will always lead no matter what and the feminine succumbs, therefore no masculine power will be subdued by the feminine power (Oladepo, 2019). Matters of power play, cultural relativities and hegemony come into play here. Some women have also experienced gender discrimination, difference, subjugation, mar-

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