Women's Issues in Development: The Case of Nigerian Women in Media and Communication

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Abstract

This paper explored the theoretical perspectives on women's issues in development, with a focus on the experience of Nigerian women in media and communication, including social media. Drawing on a review of literature on women, gender and development, feminist media studies, and development theories, this paper highlighted the importance of Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) theories in relation with the status of Nigerian women in the media industry. WID focuses on integrating women into development processes, WAD challenges patriarchal power structures, and GAD recognizes that gender is not limited to women. The paper also examined the evolution of media and communication in Nigeria and how its development affects women and men differently. The paper argued that despite some progress in recent years, Nigerian women in media and communication continue to face various challenges, such as gender-based discrimination, unequal pay, limited opportunities for career advancement, the portrayal of women in a stereotypical and objectifying manner in media content.

Others are gender bias in hiring and promotion practices, sexual harassment, limited representation of women in leadership positions. The study also highlighted lack of access to training and education, lack of funding for women-led media projects, and a lack of representation of women in senior management positions as part of the challenges of women in the media. Adopting the development theories' lens, the paper concluded with recommendation for more concerted efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the Nigerian media industry, and the potential of social media as a platform for amplifying women's voices and advancing their interests.

Keywords: Women's Issues in Development, Nigeria Women in Media, Communication, Social Media, Development Theories

Introduction

The contribution of women to the development of any nation cannot be overstated. Women are a valuable resource, and their involvement in all aspects of development is crucial for sustainable growth. In the current world, the growth of any civilization depends on the involvement of women in the media and communication. In recent years, Nigeria has paid a lot of attention to the issue of women's participation and representation in the media and communications sector. Despite this, women still face challenges in the workplace, particularly in underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. Lack of gender diversity and inclusion in this field has limited women's access to opportunities, which has also impeded their ability to make significant contributions to the development of the country. For a variety of reasons, women's participation in media and communication is essential. First of all, it promotes diversity in the industry, which leads to more accurate reporting and a wider range of perspectives. The opportunity for women to share their personal stories and call attention to topics that are important to them is the second benefit. Not to mention, it provides women with a platform to advance their careers and aid in the development of their communities.

Women make up over 40% of Nigeria's journalists, according to research by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), suggesting substantial advancements in the representation of women in the media (IWMF, 2021). According to the survey, more women are working in high editing roles in the media, such as managing editors, news editors, and production editors.

Evolution of media and communication in Nigeria

Iwelrohin fun Awon Egba, which was established on December 3, 1859 in Abeokuta, was the first newspaper Reverend Henry Townsend produced. This marks the beginning of media and communication in Nigeria. This newspaper ran for nearly eight years, specifically from 1859 to 1867, and was published bi-weekly in both English and Yoruba. The Yoruba edition cost 120 cowries, while the English edition was one penny for a total of eight pages in a single edition. Typically, it had two columns on each of its pages and no illustrations. Since that time, the mainstream media has experienced remarkable growth. The humble beginnings of print journalism in 1859 led to the emergence of several newspapers and periodicals.

Over time, there have been substantial changes in Nigeria's media and communication environment. Technology developments, alterations in governmental regulations, and the rising desire for high-quality information and entertainment have all contributed to this progression.In Nigeria, print media has a lengthy history that dates back to the pre-colonial era, when native language newspapers were written. The first English-language newspaper in Nigeria, the Lagos Times, first appeared in 1880, marking the start of the country's modern print media era. The Punch, Vanguard, and The Guardian were among the publications that grew throughout time and played significant roles in influencing political discourse and public opinion in Nigeria (Okoye, 2013). Up until the development of broadcast media in the 20th century, print media dominated the information-dissemination landscape. With over 100 newspapers in circulation, print media is still a powerful force in Nigeria.

Nigeria's media landscape saw a huge change with the introduction of broadcast media. The Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), the first radio station, was founded in Lagos in 1933. The Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) were the subsequent names for the NBC after it changed its name in 1951 and 1977, respectively (Okoye, 2013). The arrival of television broadcasting in Nigeria in 1959 significantly increased the media's reach and offered a venue for both entertainment and the delivery of information. However, up to the democratization of the broadcast media in the 1990s, the state-owned NTA was the only television broadcaster. Channels TV, Silverbird TV, and Raypower FM are just a few of the private television and radio stations that have emerged as a result of the deregulation of the broadcast industry.

The development of digital media has altered Nigeria's media and communication environment. Online news outlets, social media, and other digital channels have emerged as a result of the increased use of mobile devices and the internet. Citizens now find it simpler to acquire news and information, express their ideas, and take part in public debate because to the growth of digital media.The spread of fake news and the waning of traditional media are two issues that have been brought on by the advent of digital media. In order to address these issues, the Nigerian government has passed laws and regulations governing the use of digital media. The Cybercrime Act, which was implemented in 2015, made a number of online behaviours illegal, including identity theft, cyberbullying, and stalking (Agbese, 2020).

Challenges facing Nigerian women in the media and communication sector

In Nigeria's media sector, men predominate while women are frequently underrepresented in positions of power. Women's viewpoints and experiences are hence frequently overlooked in media output. This study has noted a variety of difficulties:

Gender Bias and Stereotyping

Gender prejudice and stereotyping are among the biggest issues Nigerian women working in the media and communications confront. This prejudice shows up in a variety of ways, including the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, the media's tendency to portray women as sex objects or housewives, and the propensity to downplay the significance of women's issues in comparison to those of males. The way that women are portrayed in the media has a big impact on how the public feels about them and how they view gender equality.

Lack of Access to Training and Technology

Lack of access to education and technology is another issue Nigerian women in the media and communications face. Women in this industry frequently lack the knowledge and abilities needed to compete successfully with their male counterparts, which results in limited career advancement and possibilities.

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

In the Nigerian media and communication industry, sexual harassment and discrimination are pervasive, making it challenging for women to work efficiently and make contributions to the nation's progress. There is a hostile work environment and little prospects for career advancement for women in this field since they frequently experience harassment and discrimination from their male co-workers and superiors.

Theoretical perspectives

Women in Development (WID) Theory, Women and Development (WAD) Theory, and Gender and Development (GAD) Theory are three independent theories that have emerged as a result of conversations concerning women and how much they gain or do not benefit from development. Using this lens to discuss the condition of women in the Nigerian media and communication industry, these theories are discussed in more detail below.

Women in Development (WID) Theory

The Women in Development (WID) Theory first came into being in the 1970s and 1980s, challenging the conventional wisdom that development is largely an economic process that leads to modernization and growth. The WID theory, on the other hand, emphasised the relevance of considering the particular demands and interests of women in the development process and claimed that gender inequality was a significant roadblock to sustainable development (Afshar & Dennis, 1991; Kabeer, 2016). According to the WID theory, the fundamental reasons of women's subordination were social, cultural, and economic difficulties such discriminatory laws and policies, limited access to resources and education, and cultural norms and beliefs that relegated women to lower places in the family and society. To address these issues, WID theory suggested targeted measures that would empower women and promote their participation in all dimensions of development (Moser, 1993). The WID theory enabled many governments and development organisations implement gender mainstreaming policies and programmes and changed the development agenda. Having a narrow focus on women's issues and failing to appreciate the multifaceted and dynamic nature of gender interactions have also been criticised (Mukhopadhyay & Higgins, 2019). Despite these criticisms, WID theory continues to contribute significantly to the development discourse by highlighting the importance of gender equality for achieving

sustainable development and by providing a framework for accounting for women's particular needs and interests during the development process.

In relation to the status of women in Nigerian media and communication, it was noted that they were denied work at the early stages of the country's broadcasting industry's development, around 1933, during the colonial era. This presupposes that since Henry Townsend, who founded the first newspaper, women haven't had a chance to work in the media and that, as WID noted, they've been limited to only reproductive roles and have been notably underrepresented in the profession of journalism's productive process. For a very long time, there were no female journalists in Nigeria. It has therefore been a man's world ever since the invention of print media in 1859.Despite the growth of the Nigerian media, women were not given the opportunity to advance structurally in media management or psychologically in the representation of women. Before the early 1950s, when women were given limited access but were not allowed to work as editors or reporters, journalism practises in this era, like in many other nations throughout the world, were exclusively the domain of men. Despite their early contributions to Nigerian media history, women like Theresa Ogunbiyi, the country's first female editor, and AdaoraUlasi nevertheless found themselves pushed onto women's pages to cover topics like women and children, fashion, and food.Hardly would you see women covering subjects in politics, economy, health and so on because they were considered to be subservient to male reporters. During this era, Media was mainly for male, more reason for the cliché "*Gentlemen of the Press*" even at the obvious presence of the females who are Media Professionals.

Women and Development (WAD) Theory

The WID method was criticised, which led to the development of the Women and Development (WAD) approach in the late 1970s. The flaws of conventional development theories, which ignored the gendered experiences and responsibilities of women in development processes, led to the creation of a feminist theoretical framework known as Women and Development (WAD) Theory in the 1970s. According to this theory, development projects must take into account the gender discrepancies that exist in society if women are to be given the freedom to participate in decision-making at all levels. The WAD theory recognises that women do not constitute a homogeneous group and that a variety of intersecting traits, such as race, class, and ethnicity, affect how they experience development and poverty. Therefore, it advocates for a holistic approach to

development that considers the complexity of women's experiences and the unique needs of different groups of women.

Relationship between WAD Approach and Nigerian Women's Status According to a research by the African Media Development Initiative (AMDI), women weren't working in broadcasting in Nigeria for more than twenty years. When it finally occurred on radio in the early 1950s, it started as an experiment. Initially, women were only permitted to work as continuity announcers and newsreaders and were prohibited from participating in programming and production. Five women were first recruited as recent college graduates with the minimum requirement of the Cambridge School Certificate, or at most, the Higher School Certificate, for the project. The Engineering Division hired its first workers as junior technical officers. One woman was later taken on as an announcer, and was eventually followed by another. These women were the pioneers in Nigeria Media, and had to battle their way up the career ladder. The surge in growth and accomplishments of women in the broadcasting and communication brought about an erroneous impression that women in the media profession were too assertive and wayward, not the right material for marriage, home-making and motherhood.

This was revolting to the African way of thinking. Parents so advised their daughters against seeking employment in the media. Wives were strictly forbidden by their husbands from enrolling in similar courses or looking for work in the media industry. Due to this mentality, there were fewer women working in the media during the early stages of broadcasting, which also affected how slowly they were promoted to managerial positions. However, because women did not succumb to such negativity, such incorrect beliefs have evolved with time. The rise in the number of educated women, the leadership of the forerunners, and the influence of the media have persuaded and inspired them to pursue careers in media education as well. Even though there arenot many women in the media climbing the corporate ladder, there are still few and uncertain job options for them. Women were primarily limited to writing about other women and domestic matters, and frequently, they concealed their identities when they needed to write due to the social and cultural context of the time. Despite women's intellect, knowledge, job experience, and educational background, males continue to hold executive positions, make decisions, and cover subject matters in the belief that women should be their subordinates and should not be seen or heard.

Gender and Development (GAD) Theory

In order to address the biases and gender disparities that exist in development policies and practices, the Gender and Development (GAD) theory was developed in the 1980s. The GAD theory, in the words of Kabeer (2019), "emphasizes that development is not gender-neutral and that gender issues should be mainstreamed throughout the development process" (p. 3). To put it another way, gender identities and the various demands, experiences, and opportunities that men and women have should be taken into account when developing laws and practices. According to Moser (2017), who asserts that "GAD has been seen as a transformative approach to development, aiming to challenge and transform gender relations and power dynamics," one of the key objectives of GAD theory is to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The GAD theory encourages an intersectional approach to development because it acknowledges how frequently gender inequities are linked to other types of social inequality, such as class, race, and ethnicity (Kabeer, 2019).

The GAD strategy aims to improve gender inequality-related relationships in (Media) society in an effective manner. It draws attention to female oppression both inside and outside the house, so advancing women's independence. In order to address inequality and advance equitable and sustainable development for both men and women, GAD created a number of programs. Some of these programs are identified in this paper, and this paper connects them to the media sector.:

Gender Balance: Achieving a balance in employment policies and staffing patterns, work strategies and creating a working environment that is conducive for both males and females.

Gender-Based Constraints Removal: All restrictions that women face as result of their gender should be removed. Such as restrictions to traditional roles, subordination at work and male dominance at decision-making positions.

Gender Responsive: Plans and policies in the Media Industry must be gender sensitive, that is, it must be fully aware of gender differences, gender specific needs and also adjust and adapt to those differences.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Free: Systems, Structures and work relationships in the Media Industry must be free of sexual violence,

sexual exploitation, abuse, forced prostitution, trafficking, harassment and other work-related harmful practices.

Gender Equality: Equal conditions, treatments and opportunities for both females and males in order to realize their full potential, human rights and dignity in Media Profession.

Gender Equal Contribution: Consequently, women too, like their male counterparts can contribute adequately to and equally benefit from economic, social, cultural and political development in the society at large.

Lectures, seminars, and town hall meetings (re-orientation & advocacy programmes) are being organised to help the general public understand the inherent value of female journalists and to encourage the inclusion of more females for balanced journalism in an effort to reverse discrimination and close the gender gap of women in the media profession. By fighting back against the negative and providing women's communities with the necessary education to understand and utilise their strength and sense of worth, we can consistently contest the idea of women as weaker vessels, sex objects, and wayward people.

WID-GAD Approach to Women in New Media

With the advent of technology and internet, the media has evolved rapidly as the traditional (print & electronic) and mew media (Internet/social media). This innovation of technology and internet has given both genders a level platform to operate as media practitioner with little or no constraint. More so, it has greatly helped and still helping more women to leverage online platforms to gainful engaged themselves in their areas of expertise, if it becomes too stressful to gain employment into the offline public/private sector.

Women who are in the new media (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter, Telegram and Tiktok, to mention a few) already and those who aspire to go into it need little or no restriction to start working online to better their lives and contribute to the society. It is super easier to combine reproductive role with productive role using social media. Social media has been leveraged upon by women to lend their voices, created hashtags (#s) to initiate movements, organise events, educate/influence other women and so on. Social Media is giving serious visibility to women and their activities thereby gaining access to opportunities that make them benefits from being productive and in turn contribute actively to the development in the society. This is

because social media helps women to be seen, heard and expose them to networking plus more opportunities within and outside the shores of their immediate communities. The promulgation of women related contents to a larger audience without having to suffer unnecessary oppression or restrictions is one of the major opportunities the social media offered women. The Internet has brought great improvement to women's lives, career growth through the interconnectedness of the Traditional and New Media and this cannot be overemphasized.

WID-GAD Approach: The Efforts of Nigeria Media Industry

The shift from WID, WAD to GAD approach is a shift from efficiency to equity to ensure that women and men are empowered equally to contribute to development of the society accordingly. Therefore, to ensure that this is achieved in the Media community in Nigeria, Associations of Media Practitioners were formed at different categories such as: The Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON); Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE); and The Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ). These associations are to ensure the practicability of the recommendations, plans and policies influenced by WID-GAD are effective in the Mass Media Industry in Nigeria. Meanwhile, to ensure gender balance and equity, it is only NUJ that created an arm, Nigeria Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ) to cater for the specific needs of women.

Discussion

With the shift from early days of oppression, high rate of women subordination and harassment to the education and employment of women in the Media Industry plus combination of traditional and new media, it is the dawn of a new era for women in the Media Profession. If the women pioneer who practice journalism had to write under fictitious names and confined themselves to women and domestic issues, their modern contemporaries are breaking all glass-ceilings and barriers to compete, and in some cases outshine their male counterparts in different genre of journalism practices.

The former National President of the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Asabe Baba Nahaya, also agreed that the situation for women journalists has changed a lot since the organization's inception. According to her, before the inception of the organization, women were not covering important issues, but now they have been given more responsibilities and we have more female practitioners at different stages of Journalism than ever before. From

features to columns writing, from politics to defense, from science to technology, from aviation to health, from local to foreign reports, from print to broadcast journalism, women are there all the way. While the gradual growth both in number and in practice of women in media is appreciated, there is need for gender balance at the management and policy making levels of the media industry in Nigeria.

It is observed that gender balance policies already in place are not effectively implemented while other gender related issues are yet to be sufficiently looked into. For example, the 12-member of the National Executive of Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ) has only one female member who is the Vice Chairman and this is the first time the executive would have a female member. This connotes that even in media industry patriarchy is still the order of the day, the gender gap is still wide and needs to be bridged to ensure not just gender equality but also balanced dissemination of information. Like the present National President of NAWOJ affirmed the theme of the 2022 International Women's Day (IWD) which says, "*Attaining Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow*" would remain an illusion in the media industry and Nigeria as a whole, except a pragmatic approach towards attaining and balancing gender-related issues in the country is adopted and respected by all.

Conclusion

The struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment continues to be a major obstacle for Nigerian women in the media and communications. Despite some recent advancements, there is still more work to be done in order to address the structural problems that contribute to gender disparity in the workplace and in society at large. The persistence of gender-based harassment and discrimination, as well as the absence of female leadership possibilities and representation in media and communication, continue to be significant roadblocks to advancement.

However, it is encouraging to witness the tenacity and obstinacy of Nigerian women in media and communication, who continue to fight the existing status quo and push for change. A substantial contribution is also being made by groups and individuals working to advance gender equality and women's rights. We can build a more just and equitable society where everyone, regardless of gender, has equal opportunities to succeed and thrive by cooperating and fighting for fundamental change. It is critical that we keep giving women's issues top priority in development and seek to make gender equality the rule rather than the exception.

Recommendations

It is possible to empower Nigerian women in media and communication using a variety of strategies. Educating people about the importance of women participating in media and communication is the first step. This can be achieved through advocacy and awareness campaigns aimed at legislators, media professionals, and the general public. The campaigns ought to emphasise the necessity of gender-sensitive media that fairly represents the perspectives and experiences of women. Giving women access to education and training is also crucial. Training programmes, internships, and scholarships can all assist with this. Thirdly, it's essential to back media projects headed by women. This can be funded by grants, loans, and other sources. Additionally, it is vital to promote gender diversity in senior management roles.

Media companies need to recognise the importance of gender diversity and inclusivity and take steps to promote women's participation in all areas of media production and decision-making. The mentoring and training programmes offered by media firms must be targeted towards women and other underrepresented groups. Additionally, media businesses must invest in the infrastructure and resources necessary to support women in the creation of high-quality content and market success. Media companies must establish and uphold rules that prohibit sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination at work.

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