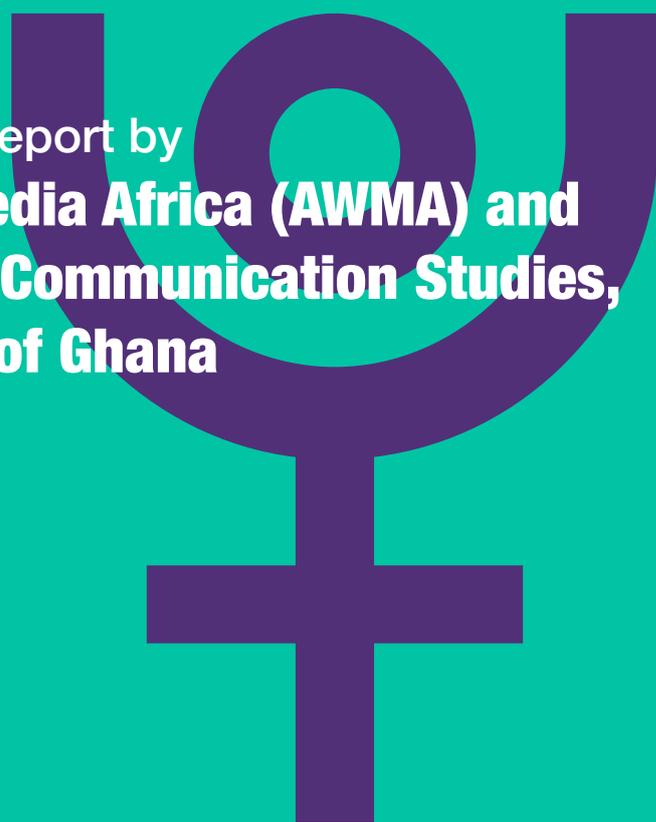


STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE GHANAIAN MEDIA: PROVIDING EVIDENCE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND ADVOCACY PROJECT

Research report by
**Alliance for Women in Media Africa (AWMA) and
School of Information and Communication Studies,
University of Ghana**



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UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

WRITTEN BY

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FUNDED BY



The United States Embassy in Ghana

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FOREWORD



SHAMIMA MUSLIM,
CONVENOR, AWMA

Let's make newsrooms balanced and inclusive.

“The Status of Women in the Ghanaian Media Report 2020” is groundbreaking work that seeks to provide vital data and evidence to aid advocacy towards greater representation and participation of women in our media industry.

Action changes things (ACT)! But to change systems rooted in systemic inequalities requires painstaking mobilization of those worst affected, those who benefit from the status quo and those who are apathetic. This is not an easy task to achieve, therefore a fair dose of sentiment and science is needed to drive the change we want.

Our histories, cultures, economies and politics have left us with an unbalanced world and unbalanced newsrooms. Media women know what we face on a daily basis as we navigate entrenched systems to assert our rights and agency. We know it, we feel it and we talk about it. Now we have a report aggregating all of our lived experiences and aspirations, because we too matter.

The Alliance for Women in Media Africa is thus privileged to have led this process of conducting this survey in collaboration with the School of Information and Communication Studies, University of Ghana and with the generous sponsorship of the US Embassy in Ghana.

It is our hope that this report will provide the baseline evidence to begin tracking progress women are making in our news media. The issues of gender-based harassment, fair remuneration, career progression, and work-life balance that this report covers provide critical entry points for debate and policy influence. Fifty-two percent of women have registered to vote in Ghana's upcoming December election- is it not only fair that women have an equal shot at producing the news and creating the media narrative?

Shamima Muslim

Good Will Message

from the U.S. Embassy in Ghana



PRESS ATTACHÉ **NAOMI MATTOS**



On behalf of the U.S. Embassy in Accra, Ghana, I would like to express my heartiest congratulations to the Alliance of Women in Media in Africa (AWMA) and the School of Information and Communication Studies of the University of Ghana for publishing this seminal work. The “Status of Women in the Ghanaian Media” report is an important body of work that presents a snapshot of the current state of female participation and representation in Ghana’s vast media landscape.

When approached with the opportunity to support this project, the U.S. Embassy jumped at the chance to take part in this initiative. This is because we recognize the important role a free and responsible media plays in the shaping and maintaining of a democracy and believe women should be at the forefront both behind the pen and in the story itself.

Our hope is that this report will be used to make the case for intentional programs that not only work to recruit and retain female journalists at all levels in the newsroom but also develop and institute policies that instill gender balance in reporting. The U.S. Embassy is confident that the publication and dissemination of this report is an important first step.

Executive Summary

This study was a nationwide survey of Ghanaian newsrooms that sought to establish the current status of women in the media. It interrogated among other things, the educational background, years of experience, and the positions held by respondents in newsrooms. It also explored issues such as perceptions of pay and promotion disparities between males and females; working conditions, and gender-based harassment in newsrooms. The aim was to produce empirical evidence to support advocacy on women's equality in the media industry in Ghana.

Using Geopolls' classification of top media houses, the study conducted a survey in selected newsrooms in ten regions of Ghana. A total of 318 female journalists from 55 radio stations, ten newspapers, ten television stations and three news websites were sampled.

The findings from the study suggest a mixed picture of progress and stagnation for women in journalism. For example, while women are currently covering a wider pool of beats, including those traditionally reserved for males (such as politics and business), they are still largely assigned to 'softer' beats. The study also found that women are yet to break the 'glass ceiling' when it comes to decision-making positions and are mostly found at the lower levels of the newsroom. Furthermore, the study revealed that women are struggling to juggle family responsibilities with their work, with little support from their organisations and face gender-based harassment at the workplace.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that media managers must enact policies against gender-based discrimination and harassment. It also recommends that gender advocacy efforts must target interventions and policies in newsrooms that will build the capacity of women, protect them against harassment and discrimination, and support them to combine their work and social responsibilities.

1.0 Introduction

Ghana's media has experienced significant expansion since the industry was liberalized some 25 years ago. What began the nation's return to democracy in 1993 as a small industry with one national broadcaster (providing both TV and radio transmission services) and mostly state-owned newspapers, is today a vibrant industry made up of more than 400 operational radio stations, over 100 TV stations (NCA Q2, 2020 Report), and hundreds of newspapers and magazines, all mostly privately-owned. In addition to these are other digital media offerings, which are widely available too albeit with little reliable industry data on them.

Often hailed as one of the successes of the nation's re-democratization process, the media's expansion has been accompanied by increased female participation, although male journalists still outnumber female journalists in most newsrooms. A 2011 study of 15 African countries suggested that women constituted 41% of the journalistic workforce of approximately 22100 people on the continent (Byerly, 2011). At the time of that study, Ghana was below the continental average as its journalistic workforce indicated a ratio of two males to one woman (Gadzekpo, 2013). Byerly's (2011) study also reported that few women occupied senior management positions with only 28% being in governance positions (e.g. boards) and 16% in top management. There were also more men than women in full-time positions in the media and they tended to earn more than their female colleagues. Another study by Otoo and Asafu-Adjaye (2011) found that out of 257 female journalists surveyed, only 67 had access to paid maternity leave and these tended to be working in the public sector, an indication that media organisations were not in compliance with Ghana's labour laws. Their study also showed that 67% of those surveyed said their organisations had a policy on gender equality but only half had a policy on sexual harassment. In addition, only a few media workers in Ghana had access to social security, something that was more the case for men than for women.

Such findings and those from other countries suggest women's presence and experiences in the media can differ from men in ways that may be disadvantageous. Indications are that several challenges militate against women's progression in the media. For instance, research by the USA's Women's Media Center (2019) shows that women in media face countless barriers, such as gender-based discrimination, which interfere with their successful functioning and career progression. Ghana lacks current empirical data on the status of women in the media industry and the peculiar challenges they face, to inform interventions aimed at gender equality in the media. This research report aims at correcting this critical gap with evidence that can facilitate the work of gender advocacy and media development organisations and improve knowledge on the situation of women in the Ghanaian media. The Report documents the status of women on a number of issues, including working conditions, career progression opportunities, work-life balance, sexual and other gender-based harassment and digital safety.

1.1 Goal and objectives

The overarching goal of the Report is to generate empirical evidence on women in Ghanaian media and to serve as a basis for engagement with different key stakeholders (e.g. media owners, editors and managers, practitioners, and regulators) on better working conditions, smoother career progression and a safer working environment for women in the media industry. It is our expectation that this Report will be used not only for advocacy and policy influencing but in training journalists to be more gender-sensitive in the workplace as well as in their reportage.

The specific objectives are to provide empirical evidence on:

1. Characteristics of women working in the Ghanaian media,
2. Whether or not women perceive there are gender disparities in work and remuneration,
3. How women journalists perceive career opportunities and progression within the media industry,
4. The prevailing conditions that enable women work-life balance,
5. The prevalence of gender-based harassment in newsrooms and organisational responses to the problem, and
6. Digital access and safety for women.

The Report is jointly produced by the Alliance for Women in Media Africa (AWMA) and the School of Information and Communication Studies of the University of Ghana. It is funded by the United States Embassy in Ghana.

2.0 Design of the study

The study is derived from a survey of over 300 female media practitioners drawn from across Ghana. The sample includes journalists, editors and other professionals in the newsroom. While originally intended as a census of women in the selected media houses, this was not realized due to poor response rates. Consequently, the data is unable to provide concrete figures on the number of women working in the Ghanaian media. It does, however, present useful indications about women's status, and working conditions in the newsroom, and the opportunities they have as well as the challenges they face in working as journalists.

We first sampled media organisations in terms of regional distribution across various media types: radio, television, newspapers and online. Next we relied on various parameters to select the specific media organisations to administer our questionnaire.

For radio, we used the National Communications Authority (NCA) classifications to ensure stations selected included commercial, public, campus and community radio stations. To select specific commercial stations within these categories, we relied on Geopolls classification of top radio in the country per region. With consideration for regional radio distribution dynamics, the Geopoll guide was used to select the top five stations in Accra and Kumasi; top three in the Western, Central, Volta, Northern and Brong Ahafo regions; and one each from the Eastern, Upper East and Upper West regions¹. Where the top radio stations in the region included a public station, we skipped to the next commercial station.

For public radio, we sampled Ghana Broadcasting Corporation's (GBC) regional stations. For community radio stations, one per region was selected guided by Geopoll's classification. Finally, we selected seven campus radio stations from the University of Ghana, University of Education, University of Cape Coast, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana Institute of Journalism, University for Development Studies and the University for Health and Allied Sciences. This process of selection yielded a total of 55 radio stations from which respondents were sampled.

For television, we also relied on Geopolls' classification to identify and select the top 10 TV stations in the country. The sample also included seven newspaper organisations namely, *Daily Guide*, *Business and Financial Times*, *Daily Dispatch*, *Crusading Guide*, *Daily Mail*, *Heritage* and four titles from Graphic Communications Group Limited (*Daily Graphic*, *Mirror*, *Graphic Showbiz*, *Junior Graphic*). We also selected three online news websites: *yen.com*, *Ghanaweb* and *Ghnews*, and sampled all regional offices of the Ghana News Agency (GNA) to represent the wire service in our sample.

¹ The study relied on old regional classifications in Ghana.

Within these selected organisations, research assistants targeted all females working in roles related to journalism practice.

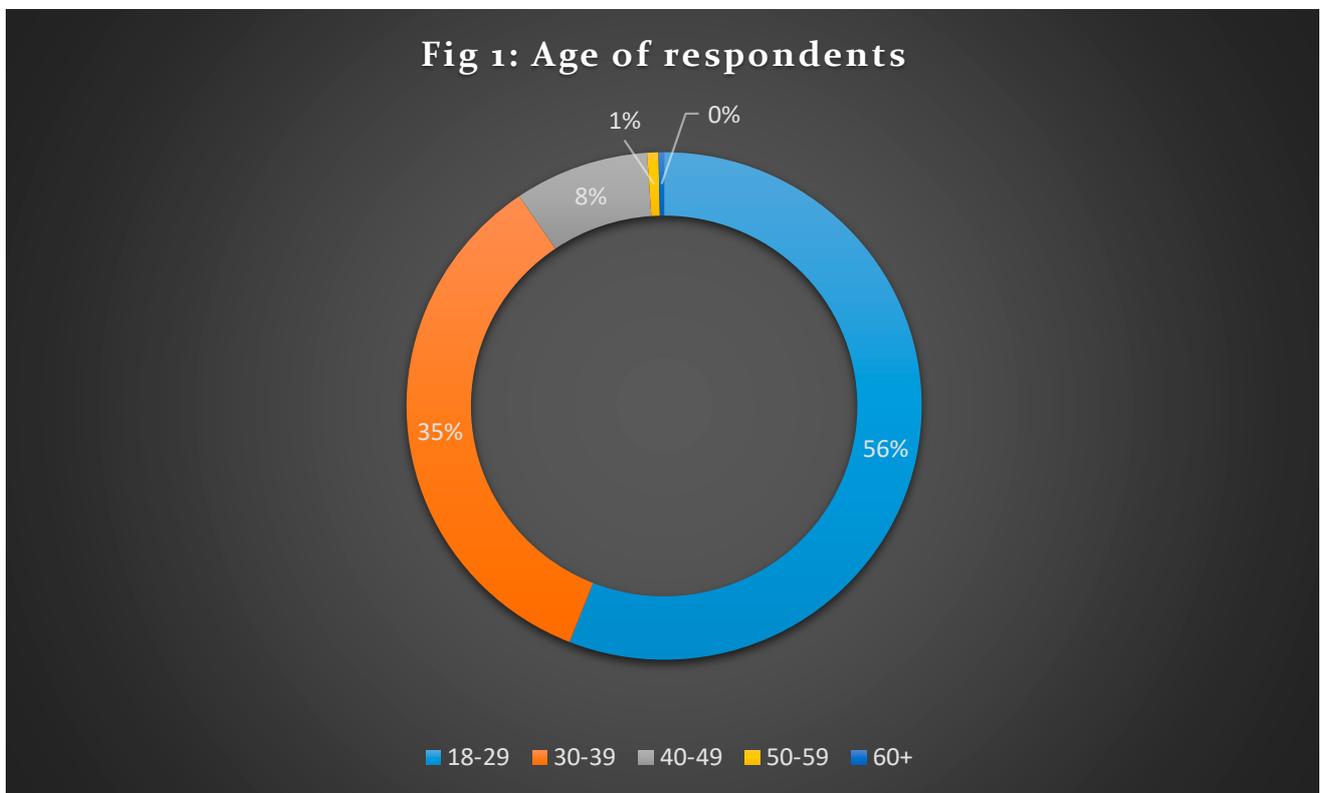
The data was collected using a 35-item semi-structured questionnaire that had both open and closed-ended questions and covered the issues indicated in the study objectives outlined above. The data collection process started with a pretest of the instrument in Accra-based newsrooms which were not part of the sample. While the original intention was to administer the questionnaire online, the pilot study led to a decision to revise this strategy and conduct in-person questionnaire administration. Thus a national coordinator, and 10 regional coordinators were recruited and trained to facilitate the recruitment and training of research assistants. These assistants went round the selected stations to administer the questionnaires. In all 318 questionnaires were completed and returned after a six-week period.

3.0 Findings

This section presents findings from the survey. It is organized into sub themes on the different issues explored in the study. It starts by providing some demographic information on women in the media industry in Ghana. This is followed by findings on their working conditions, respondents' perceptions about equal treatment, work-life balance issues, gender-based harassment experiences, and access to digital technology and safety in the cyberspace.

3.1 Respondent demographics: industry and age

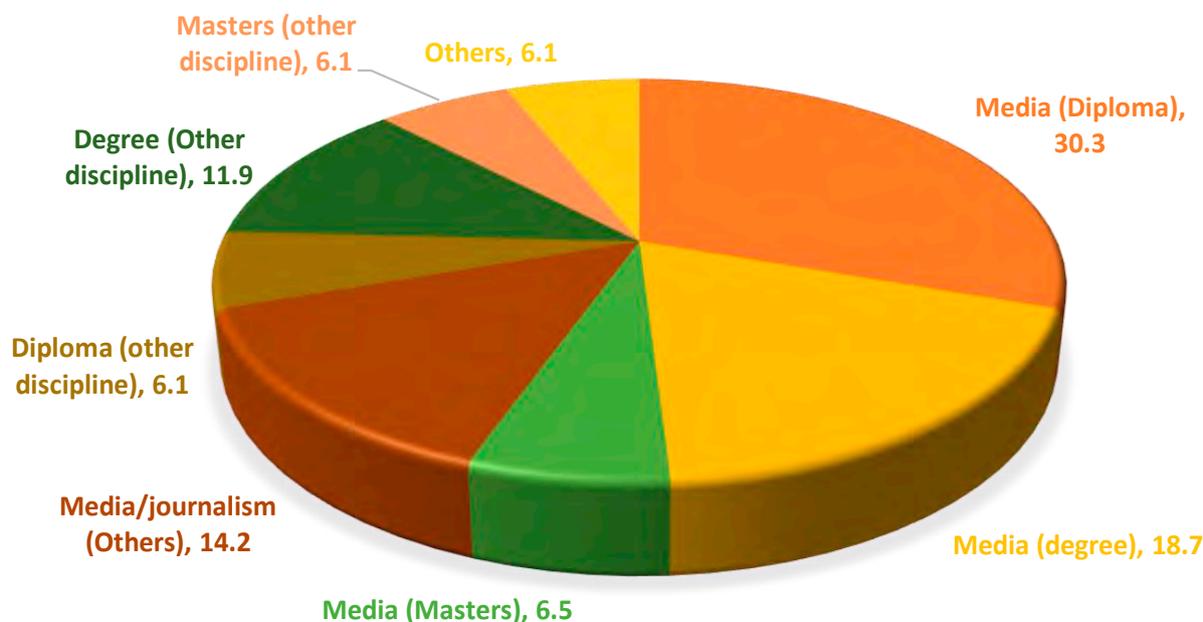
More than half of the respondents (62%) came from radio. This is followed by TV (20%), online (12%) and newspapers (6%). Respondents were generally young with 90 percent of them aged between of 18 and 39 years.



3.2 Respondent demographics: Education

More than half the sample had formal media/journalism training with the majority at the diploma and bachelors level (49%). Only six percent had a master's degree in media and journalism studies. The remaining either had diplomas or degrees from other disciplines (30%) or had been beneficiaries of short courses and on-the-job training.

Fig 2: Educational background of respondents



The fact that only six percent of respondents had a master's degree may be part of the reason women are not found up the organisational ladder. However other factors such as poor pay and long unpredictable working hours may account for an attrition of women in the media industry before they rise to the top. Previous studies elsewhere have established that journalists who pursue further education in media and communication tend to move to other media-related jobs such as public relations and advertising where salaries are usually more attractive (Viererbl & Koch, 2019)

3.3 Women's Status within media organisations

Regarding the terms of their engagement, less than half of the respondents (40%) had full time regular employment with their organisations. The rest were either interning (17.7%), unpaid volunteers (11.9%), on contract (10%), part time (9.3%), national service persons (6.8%) or free lancing (1.6). The majority of respondents (74%) are generally found at the lower levels of the organisational hierarchy, occupying staff positions such as senior and junior reporters. Less than 30 percent of the women sampled are in management roles; of these most are in middle management (20%) as opposed to senior management (5%) or hold positions as executive heads (1%).

Fig. 3: Terms of respondents' engagement

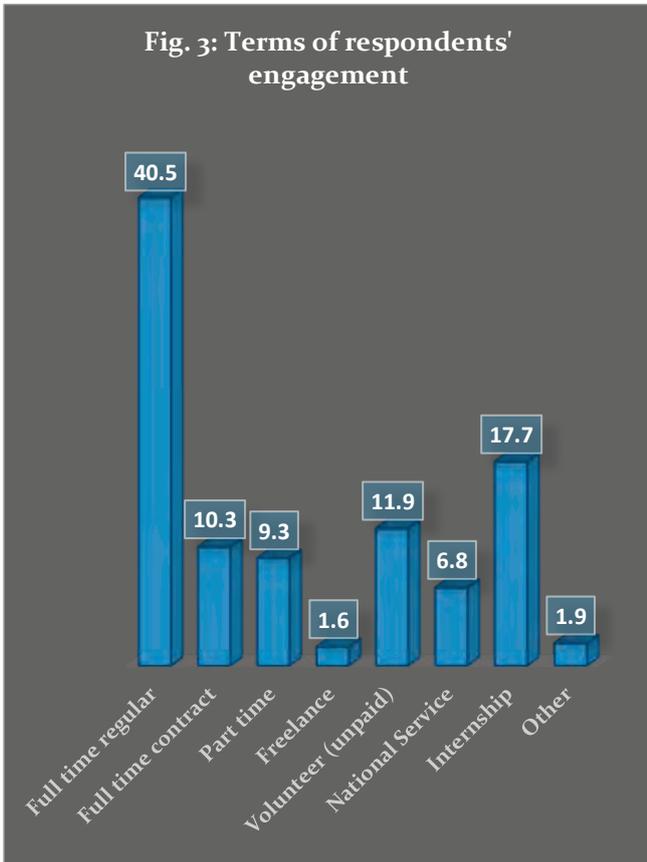
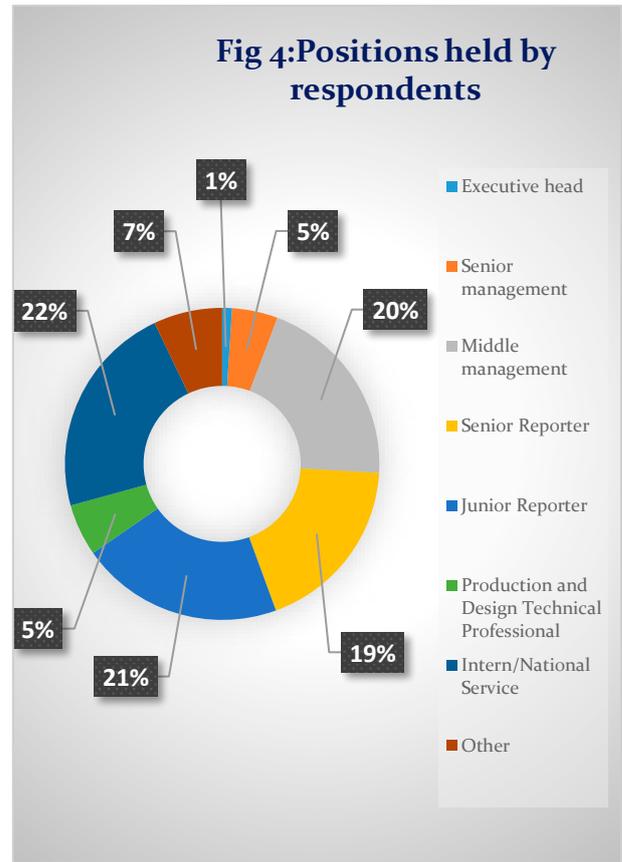
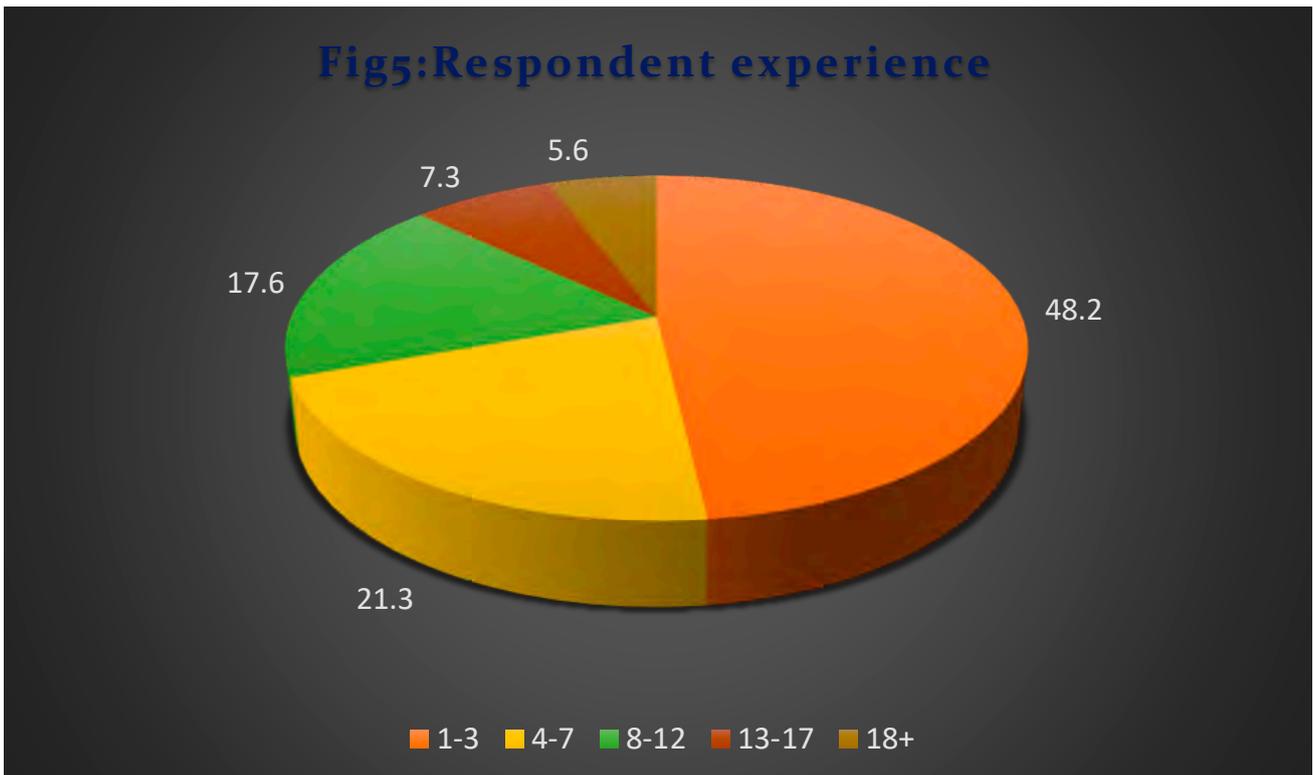


Fig 4: Positions held by respondents



The lack of women in senior and top management may have something to do with the relatively short years of experience respondents tended to have. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) have only up to three years of experience in media and journalism work. As the number of years increase, there is a corresponding decrease in the number of the respondents. The relatively young age and few years of industry experience of the majority of respondents is an indication of women's early exit from journalism careers.

Fig5: Respondent experience



3.5 Work, remuneration and perceptions of equality

The study found that salaries of respondents started from as low as GHC 150 a month. Averagely respondents earn up to GHC 1,000 monthly. Over two-thirds of the respondents (72%) earned between GHC 150 and GHC 1,000. While not all respondents revealed how much they earned, of the nearly 200 respondents who answered this question, only 14 percent earn anything above GHC 2000. Salaries in the media industry in Ghana are notoriously low and the study's findings are a confirmation of some of the factors that make journalism practice unattractive, especially for women who must choose between long hours of work with low pay and juggling family responsibilities.

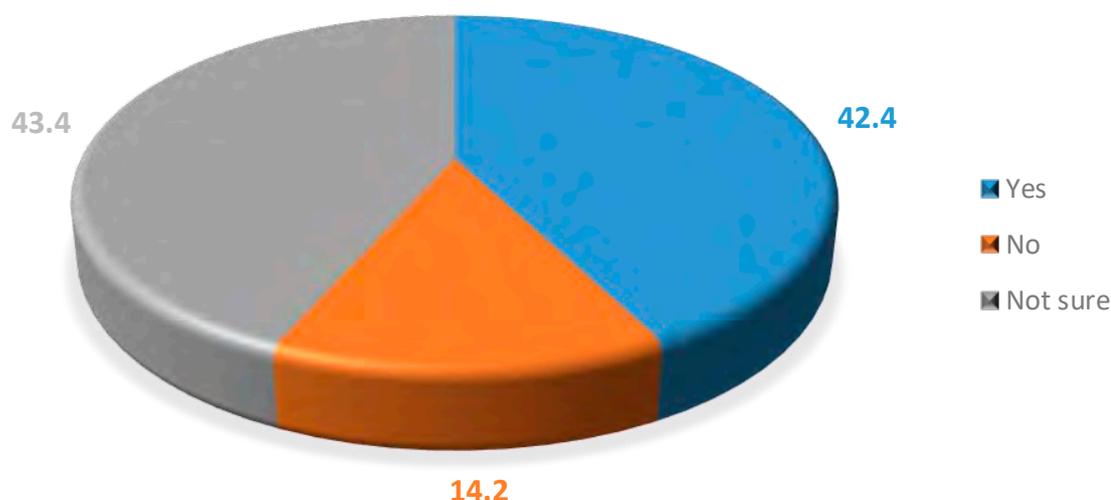
Table 1:

Monthly salary	TYPE OF MEDIA ORGANISATION				Total
	Radio	Newspaper	Online	Television	
No payment	3 2.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 6.9%	5 %
Up to 1000	83 76.9%	9 75%	14 66.7%	12 41.4%	118 100%
From 1000 to 2000	15 13.8%	2 16.7	5 23.7%	10 34.5%	32 100%
From 2000 to 3000	4 3.7%	0 0.0%	1 4.8%	5 17.2%	10 100%
From 3000 to 4000	2 1.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 100%
From 4000 to 5000	1 1%	1 8.3%	1 4.8%	0 0.0%	3 100%
Total	108 100.0	12 100.0	21 100.0%	29 100%	170 100%

3.6 Perceptions about equal treatment: remuneration

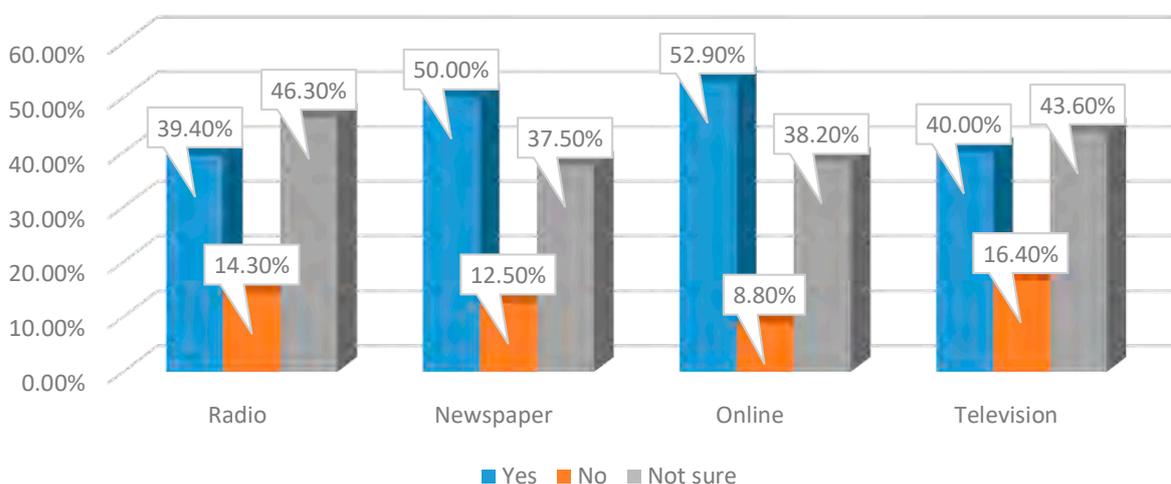
Respondents are divided on the issue of equal pay for equal work. Nearly half the respondents (42%) hold the view that they earn similar to their male colleagues for doing the same work while about the same number (43%) was unsure. The sizeable number of respondents who perceived that there might be a gender pay gap is reason for concern although there is need for further studies to prove more concrete evidence to illuminate these findings.

Fig 7: Perceptions about equal pay for equal work



Across radio, newspaper, online and television industries, there are no significant differences in perceptions of pay disparity. That said, it is interesting to note the fact that the TV industry has the highest score for perception of pay disparity (16%), followed closely by radio (14%). This is interesting considering that these are the more popular media in the country. The case of TV is even more insightful given popular allusions to TV as a woman’s medium which welcomes more women on the screen (Shattuc, 2014).

Fig 8: Perception of pay equality across industries



Reasons for the perceived pay disparities centre on two factors – low prestige of beats assigned to and covered by women and unfavourable work schedules. It appears some managers/editors give ‘important’ assignment to males under the pretext of protecting the women, as indicated by this respondent:

They usually assign us {females} to beats that are supposed to protect us. For example, my editor will say that women can report better on health issues and women and children issues. So if let’s say there is electoral violence somewhere they will say a guy should go because they can easily escape when something happens. But then, those situations bring good stories and the men will have their by-lines on those stories (reporter for 3 years with a radio station in Accra).

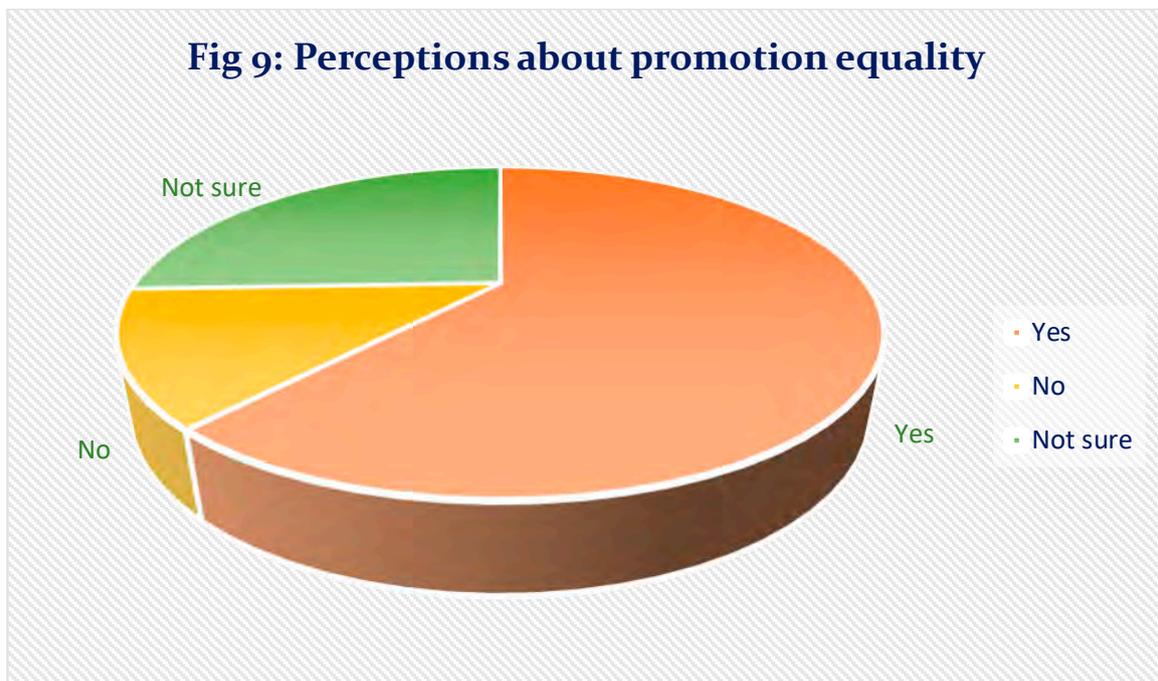
Such discrimination in assigning stories results in the perception that it is the male journalists who do the important work that bring in the income and therefore are deserving of promotion and better pay. Furthermore, the practice results in male journalists having 'important' industry contacts from whom they can get scoops and other stories, thus reinforcing the perception of their importance. Secondly, respondents indicated that women's relative time inflexibility may be a reason for the perceived pay disparities. As one argues (reporter for 5 years with a TV station in Kumasi), male journalists may earn more because of "the shifts they {males} work and the important stories that may break within such shifts." The import of this is that because some women have difficulty working all (and odd) hours due to family responsibilities, they lose out on important reporting opportunities which bring visibility and facilitate the rise up the organisational ladder.

3.7 Perceptions about equal treatment: Promotions

Irrespective of what men and women presently earn (and any inequalities therein), the opportunities available for women to position themselves for career advancement is key to determining what the future holds for women in the journalism industry. The study explored perceptions held about a number of career progression issues, including promotion and professional development opportunities. Findings were generally mixed.

The majority of respondents (62%) perceive equal chances of promotion on their jobs. However, 12% did not think that they had the same chances as their male colleagues for being promoted, while the remainder of respondents was unsure. In effect therefore, for every three women sampled, one is either unsure of equal chances of promotion or feels disadvantaged in this regard.

Across industries, we see a similar ratio of at least one in every three women having a perception of promotion inequality or being unsure of equal opportunities. However, a closer look at the data shows that some industries fare better than others on this issue. The newspaper industry is the worst with one in every two women either perceiving unequal promotion practices or being unsure of equal treatment.



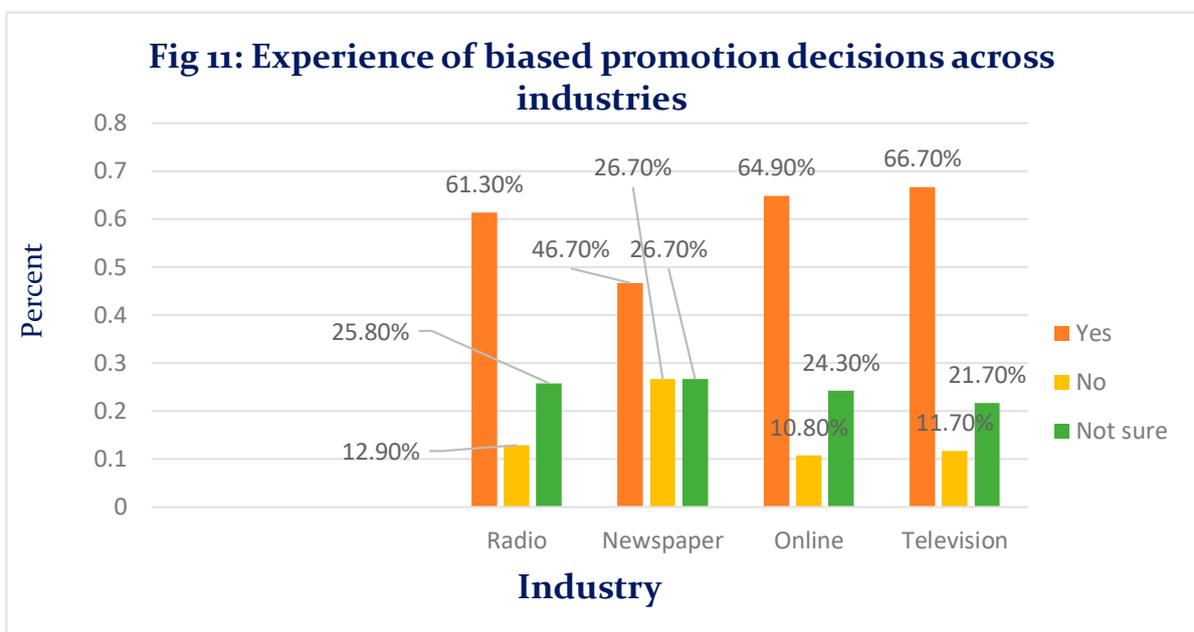
It is curious to note, however, the finding relative to whether respondents have experienced unfair, gendered promotion decisions show an overwhelming majority (93%) said they have not been passed over in promotions.

Fig 10: Experience of biased promotion decisions



Is this to suggest that the perceptions and uncertainties about disparities in promotion opportunities reported above are drawn from vicarious experiences? In other words, might it be that even though some respondents perceive inequality in promotional opportunities, they may not have personally experienced discrimination but have formed these perceptions based on other people's experiences?

Fig 11: Experience of biased promotion decisions across industries



The patterns across positions are not so clear cut, however. While majority of respondents perceived there was equality, at all levels there were women who were either unsure or thought there was gender inequality in promotions.

Table 2

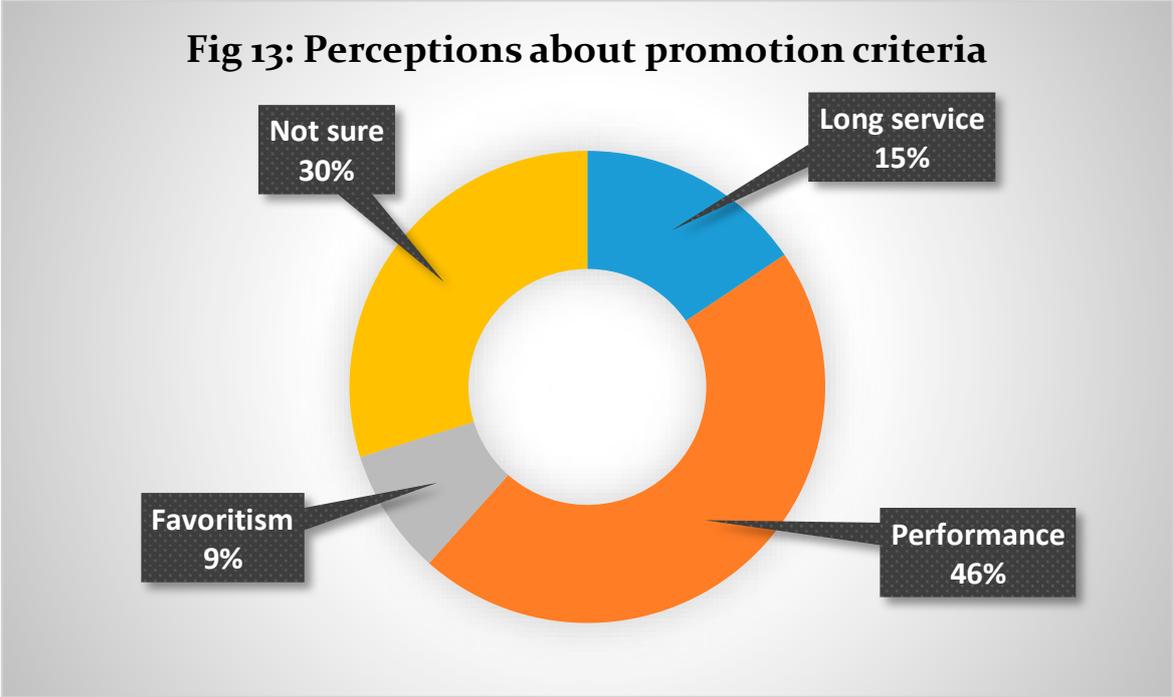
Perception of promotion equality	POSITION						Total
	Executive head	Senior management	Middle management	Senior Reporter	Junior Reporter	Other	
Yes	2 66.7%	10 71.4%	37 61.7%	35 67.3%	41 66.1%	57	182 62.3%
No	0 0.0%	3 21.4%	7 11.7%	11 21.2%	7 11.3%	11	39 13.4%
Not sure	1 33.3%	1 7.1%	16 26.7%	6 11.5%	14 22.6%	33	71 24.3%
Total	3 100.0%	14 100.0%	60 100.0%	52 100.0%	62 100.0%	101 100.0%	292 100.0%

The sense of uncertainty about promotion may stem from the fact that most media organisations do not appear to have clear promotion guidelines. Forty-three percent of respondents did not know whether their organisations have promotion guidelines and another 16% said their organisations had no guidelines.



This is clearly problematic as it means that promotion decisions may be subjectively made and may disadvantage women, given the general cultural penchant for male leadership. This finding may also partly explain why so few women exist in the higher echelons of media organisations. It is easy to conceive of how male cronyism in a male dominated industry such as still pertains in Ghana, may conspire with cultural norms to sideline women in promotion decisions.

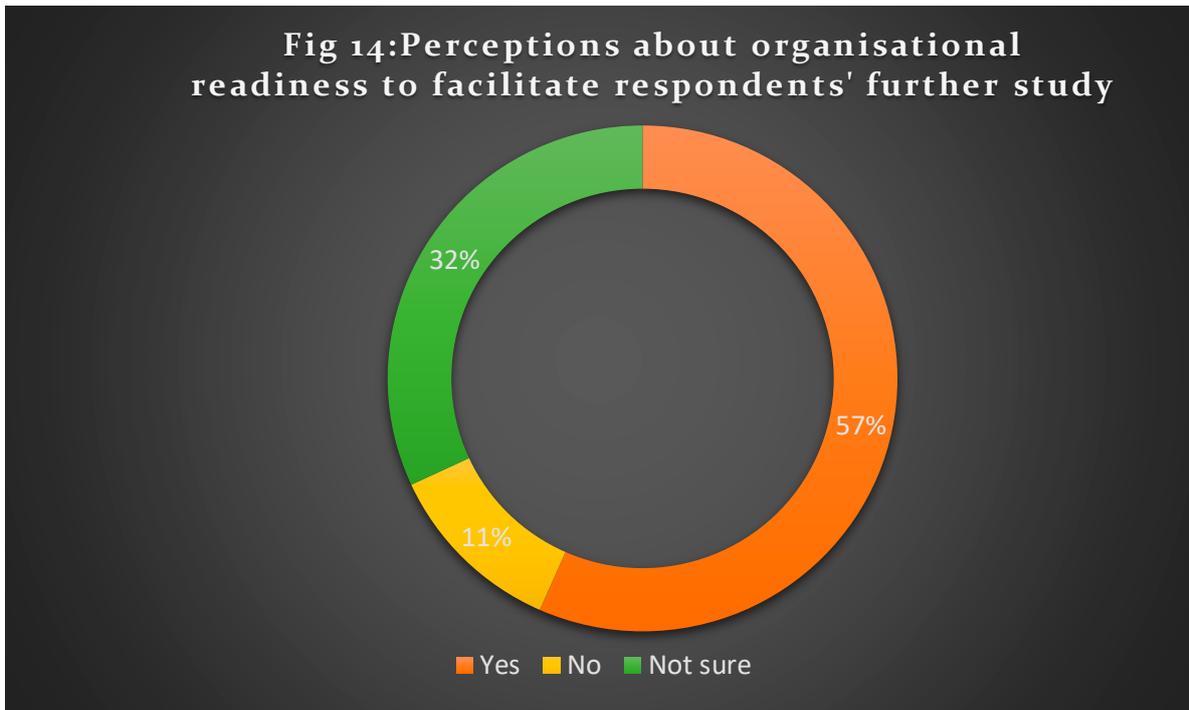
To probe deeper, we asked respondents what they thought was the main criterion used in promoting employees in their organisations. Responses indicate measures such as performance, followed by long service are major factors used to determine promotion. However, subjective considerations such as favouritism, were considered a primary promotion criterion by nine per cent of respondents. This means that for every ten respondents at least one of them thinks the only way they are going to get promoted is by courting the favour of their bosses. This makes women particularly vulnerable.



3.8 Perceptions about equal treatment: Career development opportunities

Regarding career development opportunities (e.g. refresher courses, further studies, learning tours etc.), majority of respondents (65%) felt their organisations would be supportive. This is assuming of course that they have met whatever criteria exists in the organisation that qualifies them for further study. However, a significant 35% of respondents were either unsure of such organisational support or felt it simply did not exist. To the extent that further study is one of the key pathways to career progression, the fact that a third of the sample think their organisation may not be supportive has implications for how women map their career trajectory.

Fig 14: Perceptions about organisational readiness to facilitate respondents' further study



Further studies aside, several other career development opportunities exist by way of workshops, training seminars, study tours etc. which media organisations are frequently asked to nominate participants for. The study explored whether access to such opportunities among employees is perceived to be fairly balanced. A slight majority of respondents (57%) consider themselves to be as equally positioned as their male colleagues to access career development opportunities, however, the cumulative size (43%) of those who perceive inequality in career development opportunities or are unsure of equality is quite problematic.

There is a silver lining though as this appears to be more perceptual than experiential (real). Only about three percent of respondents indicated having been discriminated against in the selection of who benefits from career development opportunities. However, to the extent that perceptions are just as powerful as reality, the fact that women in the media hold such perceptions calls for attention as mere perception may prevent them from accessing opportunities.

Fig 15: Perceptions on equal access to career dev. opportunities

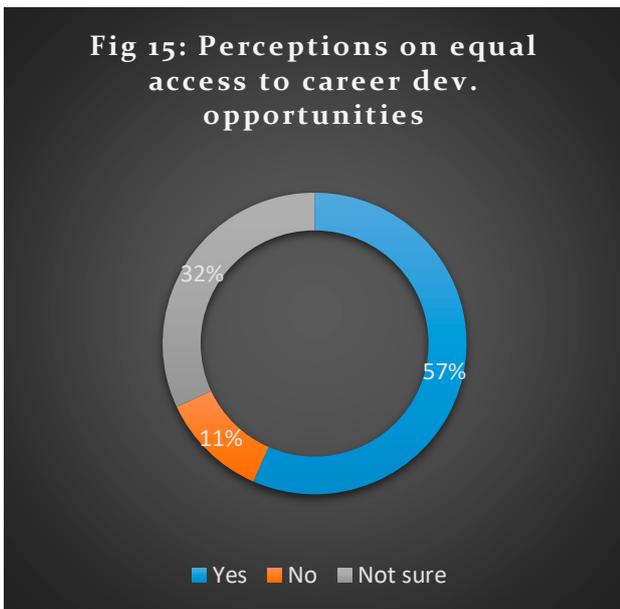
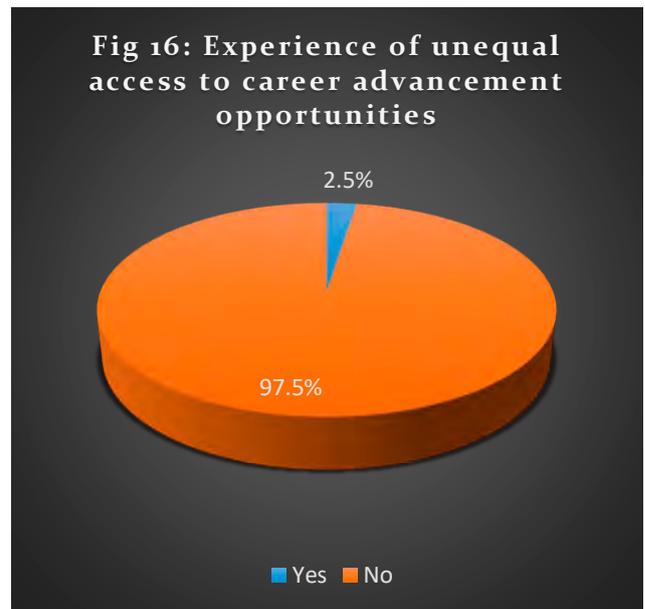
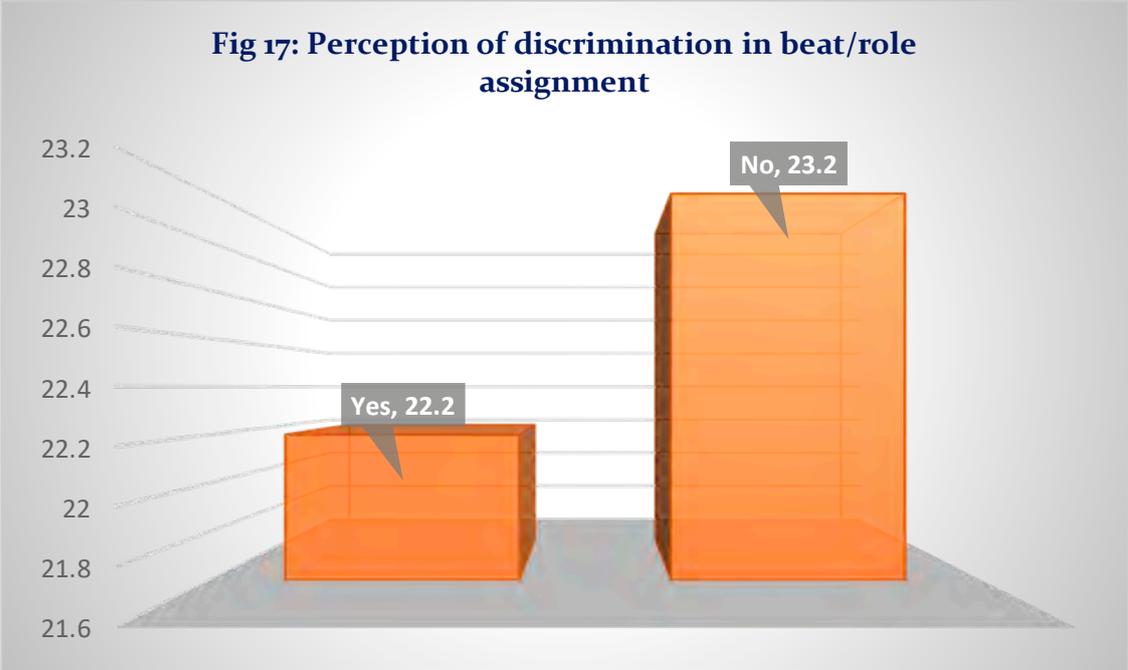


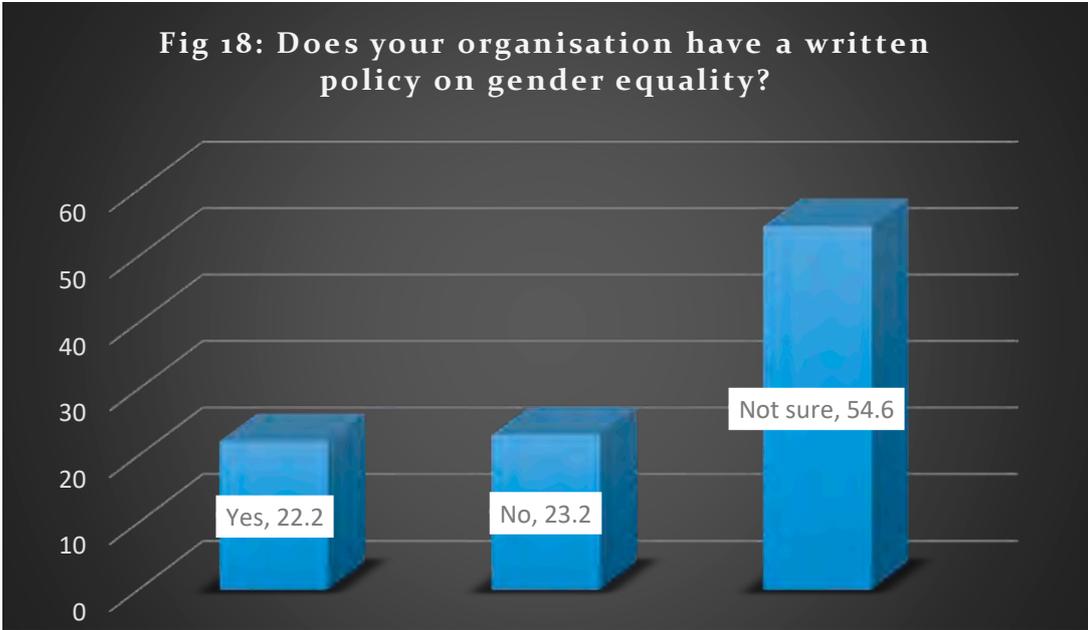
Fig 16: Experience of unequal access to career advancement opportunities



A similar pattern applies to beat assignments. So-called ‘important’ beats can facilitate the accumulation of important contacts that then serve as sources of stories and scoops and facilitate career growth. The majority of respondents (92%) do not consider themselves to be at the receiving end of unfair beat/responsibility assignments. This is encouraging but presents a surprising contrast to the fact that beat assignment discrimination appears to be at the centre of perceived pay disparities.



Underlying these lies the bigger question of what framework exists in media organisations to shape how men and women relate to each other. Simply put are there gender equality policies in Ghanaian newsrooms? Less than a quarter of the organisations sampled have policies that promote gender equality. The majority of respondents sampled were either not sure of the existence of such a policy (55%) or said their organisations did not have any (23%). As our findings show, a substantial number of the respondents were unsure of being treated as equal to their male colleagues when it comes to salaries, promotions and professional development opportunities. Equal pay and opportunities do not only need to exist for women, disparities between them and men need to be seen to be being addressed.

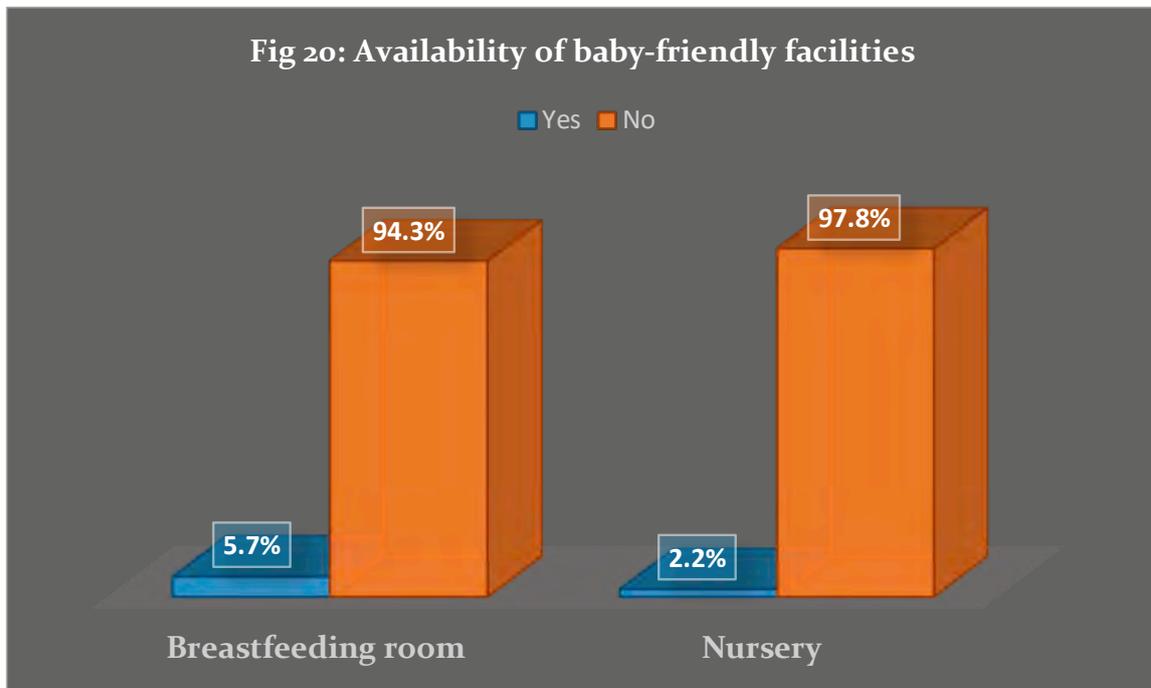


3.9 Work-life balance issues

A recurrent theme in discussions about factors derailing women's career progression is time off from work for maternal duties. In this study we explored the extent to which the media industry in Ghana makes room for women to combine their work with their maternal roles and found that generally, pregnancy poses little threat to women's work. Most respondents said getting pregnant will either cause no change to their work (39%) or lead to their schedules being adjusted to offer them flexibility (37%). However, some five percent of respondents felt they might lose their jobs if they were to get pregnant. We also found women did not feel their jobs were at risk when they gave birth, although a larger number of respondents indicated their work schedules would be adjusted. This conforms to statutory maternity leave requirements in Ghana's labour laws.



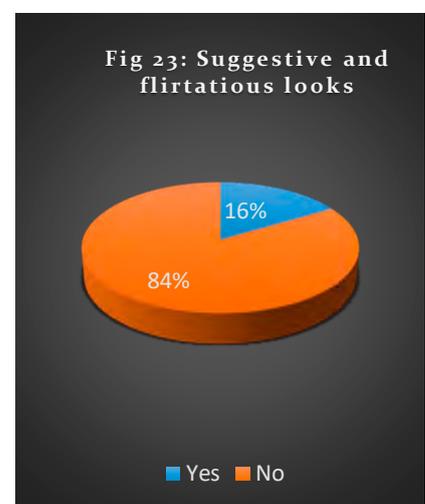
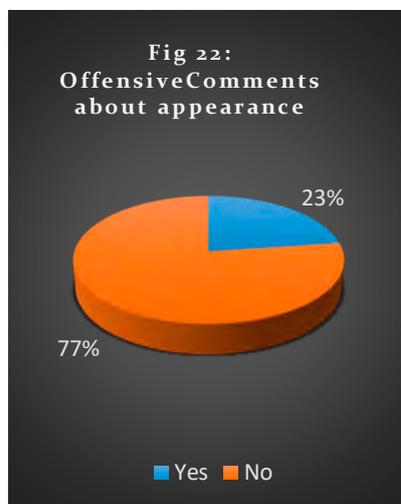
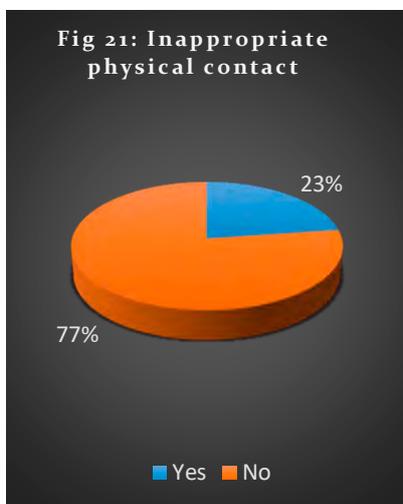
Newsrooms may be complying with the law on maternity leave but have no structures in place to support mothers. An overwhelming majority of media organisations (94%) have no baby-friendly facilities such as breastfeeding rooms where lactating mothers can express milk for their babies or keep their babies if circumstances require that they bring them to work. Only six percent of respondents indicated the existence of a breastfeeding room in their organisation. The picture is even worse for nurseries that allow women to bring their babies to the office when need be. Only two percent of respondents indicated the existence of a nursery.



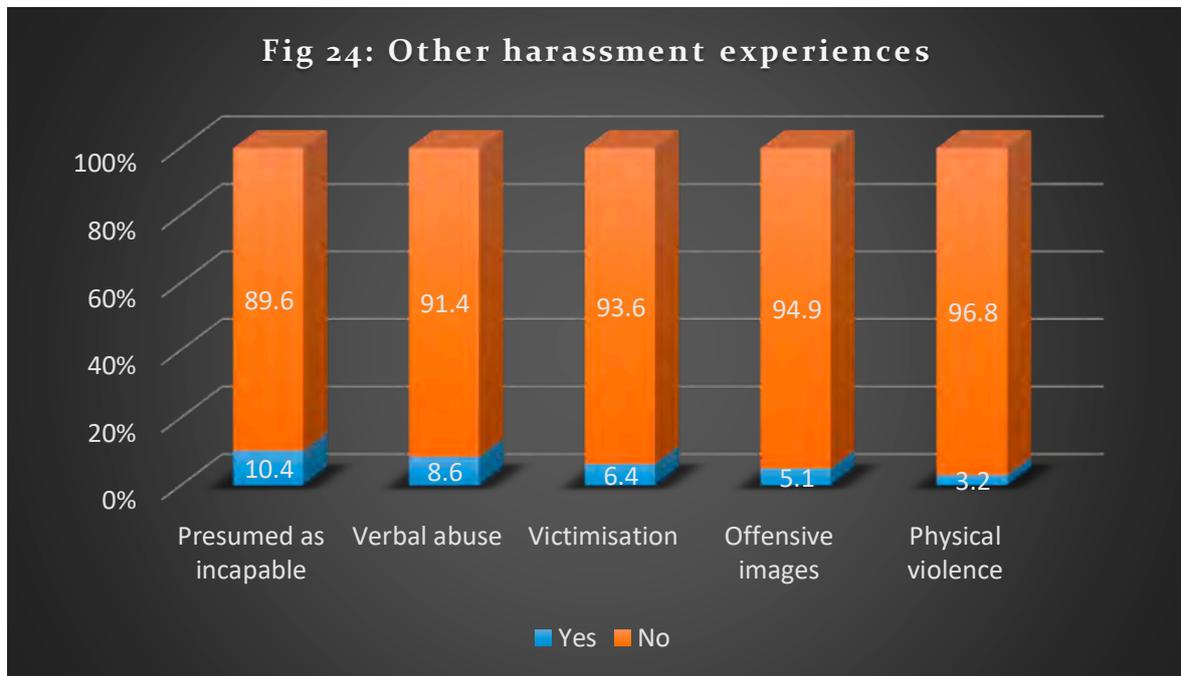
Women need such facilities to enable them effectively combine their work and social responsibilities. For instance, the presence of baby friendly facilities ensure that women can bring their babies to work, where necessary, so they can stay longer at work without feeling overly apprehensive about fulfilling their social responsibilities.

3.10 Gender-based harassment

Existing evidence suggests that media industries are active breeding grounds for gender-based harassment (Mueller et al, 2014). Like many other workplaces women who work in the media suffer various forms of harassment, including inappropriate touching, sexual coercion, physical violence, and sharing of unsolicited materials and conversations with sexual undertones. We explored these possibilities by asking respondents a series of questions on their experience of gender-based harassment and found evidence of gender-based harassment in the Ghanaian media industry. The most common forms of harassment are inappropriate physical contact and offensive comments about one's physical appearance (23% each), followed by suggestive and flirtatious looks (16%).



Respondents also reported suffering verbal harassment in the form of comments suggesting they were less capable because of their sex (10.4%), and other forms of verbal abuse (8.6%). They also faced victimization for not giving in to sexual advances (6.4%), were subjected to the sharing of unsolicited and offensive sexual images (5.1%), and physical violence (3.2%).



The occurrence of these varied forms of workplace harassment strongly suggests an unsafe working environment for women in Ghanaian media.

3.11 Organisational responses to sexual harassment

Not only did the survey find newsrooms could be toxic for women, the findings indicate a lack of commitment in addressing the problem. Most of the media organisations sampled in the study have no codes or policies to fight harassment. Only 27.8% of respondents said there was a codified policy on sexual harassment in their newsrooms. Half the sample of respondents could not even tell whether their organisations have such a policy. In other words, even if such policies exist, awareness on them is low and thus employees are unlikely to seek redress if they encounter problems. The widespread absence of institutional guidelines for addressing harassment means victims may be offered little protection, while perpetrators may either get away with inappropriate behaviours or face only light sanctions that may not be a deterrent for others.

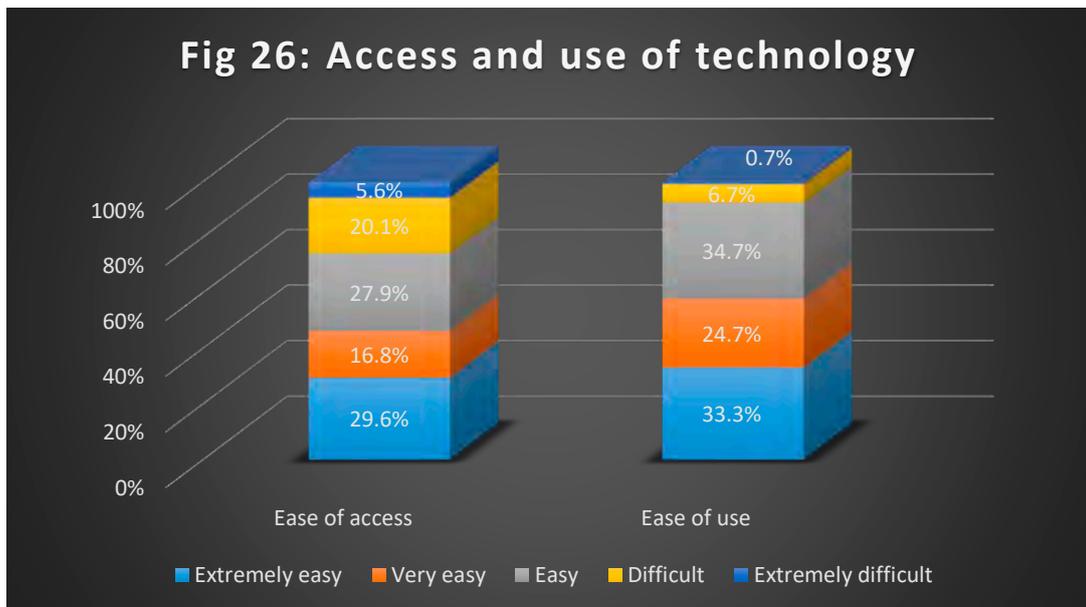


Developing policy (whether on equality or harassment) is not enough if they are not implemented. The real litmus test is for organisations to actively institute operational mechanisms (e.g. action committees), create awareness about their redress processes, and resource them to function adequately. Most organisations sampled (83%) do not appear to have a committee for investigating and adjudicating sexual harassment. This notwithstanding, it appears that reports of harassment tend to be taken seriously as 93 percent of respondents indicated that when they have had occasion to make such complaints, action has been taken.

3.12 Digital space: Access and use

Much like other spheres of life, media industries have become heavily reliant on technology and use them in daily newsroom routines. However, access to and ability to use technology can be gendered. The study explored the state of women’s access and capacity to effectively use new technologies in their work. The findings show that generally, accessing work-related technology is easy for respondents. At least 75% of those who answered this question fall somewhere on the continuum of easy access to technology for doing their work.

Fig 26: Access and use of technology

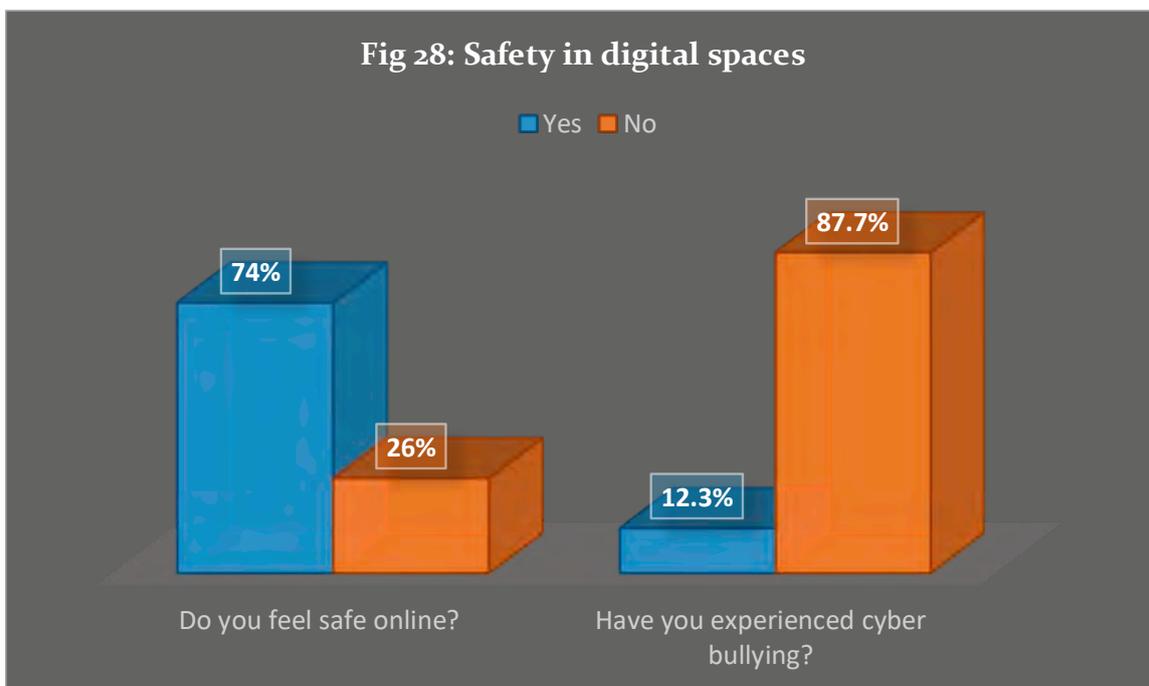


The picture is even better with regard to their ability to use such technology for their work. Only about seven percent of respondents who answered this question indicated some difficulty with using technology for their work. The remaining find it extremely easy (33%), very easy (25%) or easy (35%).

3.13 Work-related digital safety

The study also finds that respondents generally feel safe online with some 75% indicating so. However, a quarter of all respondents said they suffer cyber bullying in their line of work and feel unsafe online, with more than a tenth of them reporting having experienced some form of cyber bullying. Clearly female journalists have no problem accessing and navigating technology but have a significant minority have safety concerns in the using digital technologies.

Fig 28: Safety in digital spaces



4.0 Conclusions

Women are entering the field of journalism in increasing numbers in Ghana and while exact numbers are not available, it is estimated women constitute at least 40% of the media workforce. Anecdotal evidence suggests however that systemic inequalities persist that disadvantage women from thriving in the media industry. This study is aimed at exploring the status of women journalists and the conditions under which they practice journalism and to provide empirical evidence in support of advocacy and change in newsrooms in the country. The following key findings stand out:

- Women in the media are covering a wider pool of beats, including politics and business, but are still more likely than men to be assigned 'soft news' and social beats.
- Women perceive that there are pay disparities between them and their male counterparts and feel discriminated against in promotion opportunities.
- Few women occupy positions in the upper echelons of media organisations and tend to be in middle management rather than decision-making positions.
- Women are expected to be the primary caregivers in Ghanaian society but work conditions in the media make it difficult for women to effectively combine work with this social responsibility.
- Gender-based harassment is common in Ghanaian newsrooms but few organisations have policies to address the problem.
- Women feel empowered in the digital space but face unique concerns relating to their safety, including trolling and cyberbullying.

The picture we get from these findings is mixed, and indicative of the fact that while there has been some progress in women's status in the media, old challenges that militate against them still, persist. This mixed-bag of progression and stagnation is consistent with findings from some of the recent studies, which show that female journalists still face disparities across all forms of media (Geertsema-Sligh, 2019). On one hand there is a significant presence of young women in Ghanaian newsrooms, who are more likely to work on beats traditionally considered the preserve of males. On the other hand, women's presence in top management and in boardrooms remains abysmal. And while some progress has been made in improving women's workplace conditions (e.g. maternity leave without risk of job loss) newsrooms are still quite inhospitable to women as they lack baby/child friendly spaces to help them better manage their multiple roles. More insidiously, women remain vulnerable to all kinds of gender-based harassment in newsrooms and have little official protection because of an absence of clear policies and redress mechanisms to effectively sanction inappropriate behaviours.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, we recommend that gender advocacy needs to target interventions that offer support to enable women combine their work and social responsibilities. For instance, flexible schedules that allow women to work from home etc. Another support mechanism may be the provision of child friendly facilities that enable women to bring their children to work where necessary so they can stay at work longer without anxiety about neglecting their responsibilities.

Women need to go beyond general beat coverage to more specialized areas of coverage to deepen their knowledge and increase their career prospects in the media. Given also the finding that women are sometimes denied some reporting opportunities under the guise of protecting them, editors are encouraged to allow women to make such determinations for themselves.

Media managers also need to pay much needed attention to remuneration in the industry, if they hope to make the industry attractive, including for women. That there are people earning as low as 150 a month is a matter of considerable concern, even if these are extreme cases. They also have to pay attention to managing perceptions of unequal treatment of male versus female employees, including perceptions about disparities in opportunities for promotion and career development. Developing and publishing clear guidelines for promotion and career development opportunities (e.g. publishing an opportunity roster) and abiding by them may help.

Equally urgent are clear policies on sexual and other gender-based harassment and interventions that protect women in the media and discourage inappropriate behaviours.

The study also finds that while respondents generally feel safe online, some do suffer cyber bullying in their line of work. Again policies and guidelines that target online safety and training that help women journalists stay safe online must be put in place. In addition, in-house reporting systems that encourage women to report online and off-line harassment and mechanisms that help them access counselling will be helpful in promoting their wellbeing.

Below is a list of recommendations for different actors and stakeholders:

5.1 Media owners/managers

- » Ensure flexible schedules that allow women to balance work with family responsibilities, including working from home.
- » Provide child friendly facilities in the workplace that enables women to bring their children to work where necessary so they can stay at work without anxiety about neglecting their babies.
- » Improve remuneration in the industry to attract and retain journalists, including women.
- » Address perceptions of unequal treatment of male versus female employees.
- » Ensure promotion and career development opportunities are transparent and that women are not discriminated against based on their gender.
- » Develop, publicise and implement clear non-discriminatory guidelines for promotion and career development (e.g. publishing an opportunity roster).
- » Develop, publicise and implement clear guidelines on gender-based harassment, including sexual harassment, and signal zero tolerance for such behaviour by imposing sanctions on violators.
- » Put in place mechanisms where aggrieved persons can report gender-based harassment and other inappropriate behaviour without fear of intimidation.
- » Encourage and support women to take up assignments that lead to better prospects in career progression and do not ghettoise them to work beats that are considered 'feminine.'
- » Provide regular training for staff on emerging media and communication technologies and on how to stay safe online.
- » Develop, in-house reporting systems that encourage women to report cyber bullying incidents and to access counselling where necessary.

5.2 Women in media

- » Commit to self-improvement, including taking advantage of opportunities for further studies and training programmes that will boost your career.
- » Take advantage of the general absence of a beat assignment culture to select and specialize in areas of interest. Specialization creates opportunity for in-depth knowledge and improved reporting, beneficial to upward progression in the media industry.

5.3 Gender advocacy and media development organisations

- » Target interventions to offer support that enables women combine their work and social responsibilities.
- » Support the development and adoption of gender equality and sexual harassment policies in all newsrooms in the country.
- » Advocate for better salary structures for women in media.
- » Advocate for the provision of child-friendly facilities in Ghanaian media organisations.

5.4 Media policy agencies

- » Advocate for stricter adherence to cyber security law.

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A National Coordinator together with 10 regional Coordinators conducted the survey without whose work there would have been no report.

Congratulations and Thank You.

Profile of partners

The Alliance for Women in Media, Africa (AWMA) is a progressive, non-partisan, non-governmental network based in Ghana dedicated to empowering and networking women in media, advocating greater visibility representation of women in media, inspired by the work of other similar networks around the world. We envision a media industry where women are trained, re-trained visible and in positions of influence and power to contribute to an inclusive global discourse where the voices, stories, experiences and images of African women and girls are correctly, sufficiently and equally represented.

Our mission is to identify, train and retrain, support, connect, protect and reward African Women across the Media industry for their contribution towards changing the African media narrative. Our programmatic themes are empowerment, network, voice, advocacy and honours, with our core programmes being 'WiM' Rising, End Violence and Governance and Accountability.

You can contact AWMA via:

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