

MEDIA, GENDER, AND CONFLICT: THE PROBLEM OF ERADICATING STEREOTYPING OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The issues of media, gender, and conflict have long been a major area of research in media studies. These studies focus on the way women have been portrayed, and looked at as media. Practitioners vis-a-vis sex objects. This study provides a comprehensive overview of the continue stereotypes of women. This studies media stereotypes and the depiction of women in Nigeria media as well as the problems of gender bias.

Keywords: Media, Gender, Conflict, Women, Social Change, Nigeria.

Introduction

The representation of women in the media in Nigeria has been the center of attention of much research in media studies. These investigations have focused on how women are seen by those who set the media agenda in Nigeria. The issue is borne of the subordination of women by those who control mass media in Nigeria. Thus, in Nigeria and elsewhere, the media industry has been dominated by men. Those few women have ventured into this male-dominated industry, the few that were given the opportunity to become part of this so called exclusive club had met with great resistance especially from those who still believe in the status quo. Women have had to fight for respect, equal opportunity, and credibility. It must be noted that the 19th century in America saw the birth of women suffrage traced back to societal transformation associated with industrialization (Buechler, 1990).

Nigerian women had contributed enormously to what is known as the family unit as they specialized in maintaining their households, rearing children and emotionally supporting their respective husbands. In spite of the hardship and degree of poverty that continue to ravage the country; women continue to contribute to the economy, educational, social, cultural, and political development of the country. The media hegemony continue to dominate the media establishment as men maintain their dominance and ascertain their control on the industry, thus creating an atmosphere of total dominance of the profession and continue to set 'limits and the extent' to which women are involved in the decision making process.

In general, women are portrayed negatively in Nigeria media. One school of thought blamed the lack of representation in Nigeria media. The "other argues that the misrepresentation of women is due to men dominating media echelon with no appreciation for women's role in the sustainable

development of media. Although agenda and strategic targets for the improvement of women's careers in the industry have produced positive results in a number of settings. According to Amina Adam (2002), the increasingly global and commercial structures of media institutions do not sit easily with the adoption of gender-sensitive measures. Omenugha (2001) indicts the Nigerian media on their politics of exclusion, noting that the Nigeria media is guilty of stereotyping and is caught in this web of discordant culture that continues to exclude women. She contends that leaders in the media industry continue to give women little voice, demean them through various forms of stereotypes, and increases their vulnerability, all of which now contributes to trapping women in the vicious circle of poverty.

Theoretical standpoint

Background

Today, a great body of scholarly research and literature focuses on women empowerment even as evidence of gender inequality and exploitation across the political mainstream continue to hamper the development process throughout the country. Many studies continue to reveal the serious under-representation of women as an obstacle to participation in the media as well as sustainable development in the industry. UNESCO in 1995 note that African women are often depicted in media as victims of sex objects. Omenugha in her paper; "Poverty, Media and gender-the Nigerian Perspectives," noted that, Nigerian culture vis-a-vis religion demanded that women are silenced, secluded. The 1996 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action cited the need for gender development to alleviate the problems of poverty, neglect, violence, and conflict against women. Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan decried the alarming rate of discrimination against Women of all ages that deprives the world children the chance to reach their potential

There is no question to the fact that women continue to be marginalized in the media as well as in media decision-making even in a profession that prides itself in gender equality. The role and contribution of women have gone unrecognized for a long period of time. This is due in part to the culture of dominance, politics of exclusion, and inability to decentralize the industry. This political and industrial domination continue to take away the much needed voice of reasoning in women needed to enhance growth and sustainable development that would have contributed to eliminating gender bias and dependence on men as experts on issues of concern to women. And as men continue to offer lip service to women issues, the much needed development that would have propelled women and bring about sustainable equity in the media industry continue to erode.

It is generally estimated that the percentage of women in the journalism profession in Nigeria is exceptionally low, while those in a decision-making capacity is nothing to be proud of. In the same vein, it is almost appalling to note that with all the nationwide, newspapers in Nigeria, only one actually has a woman as the editor must be noted that some women serve in the capacity of line editors. Judging from the population of Nigeria that is estimated to be well over 130 million people, women outnumber men by more than a two to one margin, yet the number of women represented in the media is less than percent. This restricted partnership in the newsroom is a bad prescription for the media industry that pride itself in the business of disseminating information to the masses.

The media in all its power ought to serve as 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, defenseless groups of physical objects as seen in beauty pageants, and advertising and as sex objects. Thus, this policy of exclusiveness and aggrandizement coupled with the inability to bring about sustainable change and move away from the status quo continue to push women issues to the back of the burner. In Nigeria, domestic roles tend to bring about confinements, limitations, and restrictions on women as men find it difficult to relinquish their grip on the seat of power, resulting in a male-dominated media industry.

The leadership in the media industry continues to send messages to women that their self-worth is tied to a relationship with a man. Thus, the media reflects and repeats a cultural message that women are not valued because of their contribution, but are desirable to men. This position is nothing short of an indictment on the society that sees women in a different light. The 1960s brought a limitation to women aspiration and their quest for partnership in the media industry as well as social and economic development as Nigeria embarked on militarizing the polity, suspending one constitution after the other, the obstruction of career minded women to blossom as these soldiers wielded their decree pruning powers and muscles through promulgation of one decree after another that leaves no room for women to actively partake in professional media. It must be noted that these soldiers turned sudden politicians promulgated decrees that suspended rights, limited media influence, and curtailed development.

Nigerian women continue to be left out of the media industry as they trail their male counterparts who dominated the journalism profession in large numbers. Men are seen in key decision-making positions that continue to relegate women to the back of the burner. This lack of representation by females in key positions continues to contribute to the shortage of women voices in the media and, as such, less emphasis is dedicated to women issues. The Platform for Action (Beijing 1996), according to Amina Adam, calls for the elimination of negative and degrading images of women in media communications in order to provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world.

Just as the label, media, gender, and conflict is largely reserved for what men do, with little regard for actual content of women's activities, so too have the categories of feminine and masculine shown impressive flexibility. Thus, over time, the paradigms of specific qualities associated with either gender have shifted. The only thing that remains constant, however, in the midst of this confusion and change, is the characteristic labeled masculine, which tends to be whichever confers access to power.

In the study of media, gender, and conflict in Nigeria, contemporary gender and conflict presents a disturbing temptation. As McGraw (1989) argued in her overview of feminist work in history and technology, it is all too easy to forget that gender ideological construction, and accepts assumptions of male-female difference; one should question the result of the research that portrays women as passive victims. Although there are neither laws nor policies in Nigeria in the media establishment that precludes women from becoming a journalist, few women have risen to key management positions in the media industry in Nigeria. In addition, women visibility is only on the electronic media where they are used as anchorpersons and paid handsomely. Also, women journalists are glorified as secretaries, which capitalizes on the reason why Nigerians do not have

women journalists, as journalism is thought of as a male domain.

Any history of gender and the media must recognize stereotypes; their existence had brought about significant consequences. Media establishment history in Nigeria clearly reveals that women have practically no influence in determining how they are represented. Thus, media images are created through the eyes of male decision-makers. Women are equally aware of the discriminatory hiring practices in the media industry in Nigeria for quite a long time but the lack of concrete agenda that re-conceptualizes the importance and contributions of women to the industry has not been adequately generated legitimacy. It must be noted, however, that leaders in the media industry pay little or no attention to this cancerous problem that continues to eat erode the road to modernization. The fact remains though, that the Nigeria media do not reflect the gender demographics of the nation.

The assumption is that the majority of Nigerian women are said to be content with their roles as wives, mother, and housekeeper as the image portrayed in the media is far from being truthful. Each media organization has formal policies that govern the content of its product. Sexism rarely arises in these policies. It is therefore imperative to counterbalance the presentation of women in the media and to cover events and issues of concern to women.

Inequality exists in employment in the media industry as well as in the editorial and advertising decisions. Social values, often hidden from analysis, are the bedrock of inequality. Women have very few female role models in journalism. Therefore, it is difficult for female students to interact with on a professional basis or who they can empathize with if they happen to do internships. It is nothing new then to find out that women are underrepresented and marginalized. Across colleges and universities, faculties are composed largely of men and , female students must seek counseling from men who in turn take advantage of the already volatile situation. Media content is monotonously stereotypic in the portrayal of women and men. Women are passive and dependent. Men are considered aggressive and independent. Men control media organizations that produce these stereotypic portrayals. Very few of the hundreds of media practitioners, publishers, producers, editors, and so on are women.

Stereotypes of Nigerian Women

In Nigeria, like in any other country, television, radio, and print media dominate and direct public thinking. Since women in politics are a novel thing in the country, one would have thought that the Nigeria media portray women in a more palatable way than stereotyping. The rationale for trivialization of women is expressed by an article written by Apollo Bitros. He writes: the

In Nigeria situation, a lot of historical, social research (sic) conducted, indicated the (sic) women's place is in the home. Right from childhood, children (male and female) are taught to keep the roles associated with their sexes. For example, a boy cannot be taught how to cook in the kitchen except after his seem (sic) Education he may be interested in catering studies as a professional:

To drive this point home he adds;

The Nigerian Constitution is the only document which would have nilled (sic) and voided the role of women as mothers in our homes only provides for equality in terms of voting and contesting elections.

What Bitros means here is that Nigerian women should aspire to seek equality with their male counterparts because the constitution does not relieve them from child-bearing and the domestic duties that society assigned them. As Bourgault (1995) points out, "it does not occur to (added to Bitros) new model of thinking or a new code of society" (pp. 193-194). It should be added that Nigerian presses are evident of this conservative stance (Bourgault, 1995).

Given such wide spread belief, as expressed by Bitros, it is endorsed by the general population. When this occurs, less powerful groups such as women are at risk of being devalued and stereotyped by the news outlets. As Short et al, (1995) points out, when a group is construed negatively, it is easier to rally against such group. Such a label makes it psychologically easier to discriminate against the member of the group.

Endorsing this viewpoint, Anyanwu (2002) writes:

A content analysis of mainstream media in Nigeria reveals one dominant orientation. Women are largely seen and not heard. Their faces adorn newspapers. However, on important national and international issues, they fade out. Even when the news is about them, the story only gains prominence if there is a male authority figure or newsmaker on the scene (pp.6-8).

Gender and Politics

Stuadt cited in Robertson et al (1986, p. 206) observed that when a "contemporary women's group enters the political fray with reason related to gender, they meet with limited success." For example, men create hostile climate for women in their demands. We are too familiar with slogans and warnings by male politicians of the dire consequences of women's equality such as soaring divorce rate, a rise in illegitimacy, and the loss of African customs. This has created a siege mentally and has hindered women in politics. Ambition is a plus for men but a liability for women. To make matters worse, women are often stigmatized by this system. Over the years, become victims of irresponsible policy and sexual inequality within the system as well as lack of representation that continue to allow⁷ their interest to be underrepresented. And, according to Ifeyinwa Udezulu (1999), and cited in Feminization Development Process in Africa, the woman is proletariat, and man the elite.

Women were also extremely scarce in news department decision-making positions. It is an irony that there are no employment data to corroborate this deficiency since there is no accountability of any form to adequately pinpoint this acute shortage of women in the industry. The debate as to whether women are less qualified or victims of prejudice has not been confirmed in the Nigerian media; nevertheless, the fact remains that women continued to be short-changed and lack the opportunity to progress through the hierarchy.

It is appropriate to note that many names have been given to women in the media in Nigeria to

discredit their ability to partake in the decision-making process within the industry. Women have been portrayed as the weaker sex as opposed to looking at them as the most important asset in society. The communication of women issues in the media is hopelessly ridiculous since there is a lack of a gender-sensitive media policy that takes into account the appalling record of crime and negative reportage of women issues as well as over-sexism in the mainstream broadcast/print media. And unless women are adequately represented in the Nigeria media to effectively play an active role in promoting gender sensitivity, women will always be marginalized.

Many women's organizations in Nigeria continue to maintain an apolitical stance because of the dangers inherent in entering the political fray. They are aware that they will not be successful. Rather than using their resources effectively in the political mainstream, most Nigerian women enter politics on the terms set by their male elites, who use them for their own vested interests.

During the nationalist period in Nigeria, competing national parties bid for the support of this large group of women. In spite of their numbers and organization they merely served as a vehicle to be tapped by the major political parties than to stand as an active group to be recognized (cited in Robertson, et al: 208). In some instances, they were co-opted into the major political parties to strengthen the party's political base. In one instance, the party founded by the late Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti was co-opted into the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), later changed to the (National Council of Nigerian Citizens). As a result, the strength of her party was watered down or became ineffective in galvanizing women to seek political positions. During the elections, these women organizations were nothing but toothless bulldogs (Robertson, et. al, 1986).

Gender and Conflict

Many of the social conflict issues raised directly affect women: female genital mutilation, polygamy, property succession rights, as well as the more violent issues such as displacement, loss of loved ones and livelihoods, family disintegration, rape, and other forms of abuse against women and girls, it must be noted that the involvement of women in the media in Nigeria in recent, post-independence development. The advent of modernization coupled with creation of states as well as more radio and television broadcasting after the civil war brought women into the all male dominated industry, even though the percentage of women in media is comparatively low. Women in the media in Nigeria continue to come into conflict with this male dominating media culture that continues to discriminate against women.

The media society looks at independent minded women journalists as threats to authority at home or rather sexual prey to the all powerful men they happen to come in contact with during the course of their profession. Social attitudes also suggest that the media ignore prominent women's views as journalists go about looking for authoritative comment. The general consensus is that women issues are used to titillate and sell media. -products, while serious gender issues are neglected. It is a common practice in Liberia for women to buy spaces in the country's newspaper to ensure that their views are heard. Meanwhile, women journalists have to fight hard to start a woman's column and ensure that it survives.

Newsroom prejudices and realities that moved women towards handling only women issues rather than politics, economics, and sports, include training, opportunities, aptitude, and exposure. It is not uncommon to see women journalists in Nigeria working in areas they are not suited for as they are not encouraged or encouraged .to move into the male dominated editorial and management areas. Chris Anyanwu now a senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who spent time in prison under the military regime for what was said to have been her part in a coup plot is an exception to the rule having demonstrated her consumerist and professional credentials in founding her own newspaper.

There are disparities between male and female journalists as they exercise their professional duties. These disparities are borne out in conflict situations as women are further perceived and regarded as liabilities not bold enough to withstand the rigors of reporting from the field. Making such comments about women covering conflict' situations such as 'women cannot run', 'they are frivolous', 'wear make up and long nails' in a country like Nigeria where not many women (are into the entries so called awkward).

It is an accepted norm in journalism to respect professionalism regardless of whether the journalist is a male or female. It is such an irony that Nigeria institutionalizes the media to form a barrier for women. Given the fact that men have the competitive edge and control the selection processes, women are thought of as intruders in the gentlemen's club of media. Most of the media establishment is reluctant to employ women to high profile positions, such as editor. Significantly, women lack the old boys' network to empower them into the elite positions.

The media play a very important role in contributing to the socio-economic development of countries like Nigeria and also in the transmission of societal values and norms. The media tend to ignore the fact that women are also intellectually capable, great decision-makers, business-minded individuals capable of contributing immensely to media development. Perhaps this is why women continue to sell everything from alcohol to cigarettes to cars. In short, sex sells.

Thus, for a country like Nigeria that embraces western development models with structures like nearly all her institutions, this is regrettable reflection of westernization. The media in Nigeria is, for example, not living up to expectation, as the establishment of management is acutely biased against women. This prompted Frank Ugboaja (1980) to

say,

Nigerian media objectives were thus from the start based not on cultural needs and values of the people of Nigeria, but on its experiences and biases of culturally distant colonial experts; the media system was designed to be grafted onto African communities (p.16). Men dominated the media then, they still dominate the media today.

Women and Change

The winds of change that swept through Europe and Africa in the 1980s brought some much needed change to the polity of African countries as well as other developing nations as they

began to look at issues of concern to women and began to take appropriate measures to combat the disparities in gender inequality. Corazon Aquino became the first female President of Philippine; Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan, was the first woman to head an Islamic government; Violeta Barrios De Chamorro became the first female President of Nicaragua; and Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court.

These changes led to the adoption of the Beijing Conference (1996) that led to more gender equality and women empowerment. The Platform for Action adopted by the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing brought the issue of women and media to the forefront of the media agenda. The conference pointed out twelve critical areas of concern to women. And according to UNESCO (2003), progress was made in establishing guidelines and development programs aimed at promoting an increase participation of women in the media coupled with diverse portrayal of women in the media. Nevertheless, UNESCO (2003), concluded that bias against women remains in the media. Women are becoming better organized with professional associations and other bodies to promote women agendas. Although, it must be noted that in spite of the fact that women had made head-way in the media establishment and are becoming more and more prominent, they still lag behind in managerial positions.

In 1985, Kenya began to recognize the contribution of women" to development and began to implement policies and programs that will ensure equitable share of benefits from development, hence eliminate gender biases. The Kenyan government increased the number of women in decision-making capacities in both traditional and non traditional sectors. More and more women are seen in the media establishment writing and reporting the news. Mexico declared a decade for women and increased the role of women participation in planning and implementation of United Nations Development and Population program (UN, 1995).

Prior to the changes that swept the world in the 1980, women in Nigeria and other parts of Africa had been seen as a major force in nation building and economic development. The United Nations report that women account for 1-2 percent of the senior management positions in the economic sector and that it will take more than a century of tremendous hard work coupled with serious planning for women to be fully integrated into the system (UN, 1995). is a fair an accurate notation of how much work is needed to close this reprehensible gap. In all, women outnumber men by more than 2:1 ratio. The United Nations reported that less than one third of women are in the work force. They are still being less paid than men for equal work and own less of the world's wealth.

The Need for Change

The world can no longer sit idle and turn a deaf ear to gender inequality taking into account the role women had played and continued to play in ensuring peace and prosperity at home and abroad, economic prosperity in the work place, sustainable development across the board, and peace and harmony in the political front.

As the world progresses in the 21st century, the need for change cannot be more apparent. And it is now more apparent that gender disparities should be a thing of the past. Change and development initiative and efforts must be made to decentralize the status quo and open the media institution as well as leadership positions to all so as to create a positive atmosphere of

economic and social inclusion. Nigeria must take interest in promoting gender equality, encourage and facilitate social changes that are fundamental to the mobilization of gender equality and issue of concern to women.

Karl Deutsch (1963) defined social mobilization as the process by which major clusters of old, social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken, and people have acquired new patterns of socialization and behavior. And as it is, Nigeria needs serious house-cleaning and should work toward gender integration and reach out to women from all spheres of influence.

Thus as the media industry begins to recognize gender reforms and development, effective and successful planning should be made to have women in strategic and recognizable positions within the industry. After all, the need for a multi-channeled information flow will be the underlying factor created to foster gender mix. Nothing will be accomplished without the participation of women if men continue to dominate the center. The media industry must be attuned to the voices of dissent, even as a new generation of educated, progressive, and dedicated women are emerging from all sectors and quickly becoming part of the mainstream.

Among the many reasons often given as excuses to exclude women from leadership positions in the Nigerian media is the idea that women lack the necessary skills to effectively manage media outlets. Contrary to that position women are known to exhibit good management qualities and have not been accorded the right to physically shoulder the responsibilities of managerial skills to make decisions. One of the most obvious questions about leadership is also the most elusive. According to Richard Nixon (1982), who enumerated the traits of successful leader, he proclaimed that high intelligence, courage, and hard work, tenacity, judgment, dedication to a great cause and a certain measure of charm as the key ingredients, (p. 131). Nothing can be more accurate and assertive as prescription for leadership in the media industry. Now is the opportune time to reach out to the disenfranchised women, the grassroots of women, and increase the number of women in key managerial and decision making-positions and end stereotyping of women in the media.

Situational Constraints

Writers and analysts stress the impact of situational constraints, most especially motherhood. The most enduring obstacle for women entering the media industry is responsibility for children at home. The unpredictability of a daily schedule for women and their children continues to be a stumbling block for their nontraditional participation in the profession. In addition to this, men believe that the rigors of reporting the news, the timeliness, and immediacy may be too much of an activity to women as it is more conducive for men to travel from place to place without hindrance.

Researchers and writers, according to Cantor (1992) stress socialization as the main reason for gender inequality in the media industry. Males grow up in a competitive environment. They are taught from an early age to be team players. They are accustomed to winning and losing. Sports prepare men for these structured groups, even with people they do not particularly like. Thus in Nigerian society it is not uncommon to see women traditionally socializing in small play groups that emphasize cooperation rather than competition. And according to Bartol & Butterfield, (1

976), Jayo & Vroom, (1982), gender stereotype dictates that women should behave differently, nurturing and service-oriented, but not tough and achievement oriented. The problems confronting women in politics have been attributed chiefly to the tensions between ascribed and achieved status by female socialization" (p. 123). Women have not been able to break through the male-dominated institution because women are still being treated as sex objects. While these facts serve as a stumbling block to gender equality, many women are divided between their support and loyalty.

Sexism is one important factor that inhibits women from gender equality. Nigerian women are no exception. Large segments of the women population in Nigeria do not feel comfortable when they choose positions society considers unusual as their assigned sex roles. Many men will feel comfortable as long as a woman is seen as an appendage to them. In addition, Nigerian society denigrates women in power. This is similar to the Biblical story of Delilah. It must be noted that she had a considerable amount of power, yet, her power was considered totally sexual. To many analysts, it is really not power; it is plain sexism. This kind of generalization puts aggressiveness, outspokenness, and ambition for women seeking higher and prominent roles in the media. It should be noted that the education of women in African history is nothing to boast about because it does not serve to empower women. Male bias is one of the many factors that have inhibited women from taking active roles in the media industry. This is reinforced in many instances by colonial policy in Africa, the Caribbean, and in the Middle East and even in Latin America that favored the education of boys as opposed to girls. This insensitivity tends to cut off women from occupying managerial posts. This same bias is evident in the post-colonial era (Stratton; 1984, p 80) Ayesha Imam clearly noted this at the Third Annual Conference of Women in Nigeria. She stated that, "Not only are there more boys than girls in schools, but also there are more school places for boys" (cited in Stratton). She went on to say that 76 percent of families "would rather educate their sons than their daughters, if finances were limited... [and] this has generated a social prejudice that limits females from reaching their potentials and for not involving themselves with a war they thought they could not win."

Parents in Nigeria contribute significantly to female's inability to shatter the "ceiling glass" syndrome. Most parents believe that educating girls would amount to nothing since they would eventually get married and leave home; the boys, on the other hand, will carry on the father's legacy. As a result, women did not meet the necessary requirement for taking their rightful place within the media industry. This reluctance to train girls during colonial and post-colonial periods delayed women appearances in the educational scene, and hence affected their economic and political participation.

Other constraints that continue to get in the way of women's emancipation into the mainstream is the marginalization of the majority of women in the rural areas through what can be said to be the process of production and distribution. And, according to Ogbomo (1993), this has hindered the mobilization of women toward getting invited to political parties.

It must be noted that today the media industry in Nigeria is viewed by the leaders as the instrument to further their aims of nation building and modernization and for supporting the government in power (Hatchen, 1971). They did not consider women as part of those that will shape the establishment. And they have been able to achieve this exclusion by tightening their control over the media industry.

Nigerian women generally lack the financial capability to establish media outlets; this constraint places a full fledged ownership in the corridors of men. In addition to this self-centered and self-serving pattern of ownership, men dominate the profession. This is evident from the phrase "Gentlemen of the press," often used to address journalists by heads of states in Nigeria and thus underlies the assumption that there are no women in the media. The effect of this has been that men dominate the whole news media both in numbers and in key positions. For example, the Independent Journalism Center in Lagos, in a recent survey, found that women are under-represented in all aspects of the media. It is estimated that the percentage of women in the media profession is an indictment of the leadership.

The domination of the news media by men and the predominance of male perspective in news reporting have created a situation where there is lack of focus on the participation of women in all other areas of influence with Nigeria. Gender issues are not given adequate coverage in the media and, where they are covered, they are perceived from a male point of view.

Conclusion

The need for gender equality cannot be over emphasized especially in this age of technological advancement. The need has never been more apparent and urgent to provide management programs in the media industry to propel women in economic, political, and social development as we continue through the 21st century. It is believed that injustices directed at women in the media industry in Nigeria over the years necessitated the need for change in attitude about stereotyping, sexual harassment, violent against women, and other societal ills directed at women. This return will help alleviate the problems associated with exclusion and gender disparities. Every agenda, every initiative and every effort should be made to train and educate more women in managerial positions and decision-making processes within the media industry so as to keep them abreast of the need to change and become part of the change.

In an era when development is the subject of intense government concern, the need is to recognize that the ultimate impact of modernization policies on women must be determined largely by how much power and influences women have. Development does not happen in a vacuum; it is subject to incalculable political and administrative influences. The government at both the federal and state level as well as leaders in the media industry must take a broader look at the issue of gender and equality and bring about apparent change to the shameful problem of stereotyping of women in the Nigeria society. Individuals have argued that women voices are seldom heard at any level within the media hierarchy. The historical trend of declining female power is not irreversible, as the experiences of societies in Western Europe and North America has dictated. The expansion of political participation offers women the same opportunities it formerly offered property-less or uneducated men.

Balancing this relative optimism scenario is the grim reality of increasingly militarization of politics throughout Nigeria. Comparative analysis of military and civilian regimes determined that the chief executive position in the 1980s was filled with a member of the armed forces. Over and over, women have pointed out their under-representation in the media institution including editorial decision making and advertising, and the picture is hardly better for the future of women's concerns. Although it is recognized that some women in powerful positions identify themselves with men and not with women, the absence of women in these positions' is still

unhealthy. The late Margaret Mead argued for a greater internationalization of female roles to counteract the increasing dehumanization of the world.

In her book on discrimination against women in the Third World, Barbara Rogers (1980) focused on the dominance of male planners a male bias in planning, and she noted that women planners do not automatically reverse preexisting discrimination against women in development projects. Since 1970, a debate has been underway concerning the effects of change in developing nations on the well-being of women. In the study that marked the turning point in the thinking about women in Third World countries, Ester Boserup (1970) the Danish Development expert argued that since technological changes in farming could entail a "radical shift in sex roles in agriculture." The exclusion of women from extra-familial activities was not particularly important in traditional society that was not concerned with progress; but it is an anachronism in a society that professes to wish to change and is actually investing both capital and effort in bringing about change and development. To confine women to the family structure is to keep them at subsistence level at a time when entire sectors of the economy are growing toward a money base (p. 5). She went on to document how women's impoverishment increased during colonial rule. Colonial rulers, she noted subjugated and crippled their own women have forbidden them to going into skilled and intellectual roles. This limitation also was brought to the colonial areas, thus limiting colonial women access in acquiring land, technology and even employment outside of the home. This economic bias against women is captured in the under-representation of women in colonial era according to Diamond and Orenstein (1990).

The theoretical justification for gender equality derives from the fact that women continue to contribute enormously to the political, economic, social, and cultural development of Nigeria and else-where in the world; yet they are far from eliminating the stereotyping, sexual discrimination, job discrimination, and the politics of exclusion. Thus, effective media planning and agendas that recognize the potential of gender equality ought to be the shining armor for all. Also*an adequate flow of information is required for knowledge to be shared by those who have more and those who have less on gender issues. It is a foregone conclusion that no nation can thrive in an atmosphere of gender inequality and exclusion. Therefore, for Nigeria to achieve greatness in this age of information powered by technological advancement, concerted effort must be made towards gender equality and social, economic, and political empowerment for women. Every effort^ must be made to combat gender disparity, and provide initiatives that will further enhance and bring women to their rightful places within the media industry vis-avis places of power. Women understand and can better explain issues of concern about women to women and the society must adhere to that. And according to the slain civil right leader, the Rev Martin Luther King, Jr.,(1968) in his letter from Birmingham city jail in Alabama:

Human progress never rolls on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the timeless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation." (p. 296)

He went on to say that people must use time creatively and forever realize that the time is always ripe to right. Now is the time for media leaders in Nigeria to improve on gender equality. Finally,

it will be the ideal and right thing for men to do away from dominating the leadership position within the industry and give women the much needed opportunity to allow equitable order in the way business is done so that women too can assume leadership roles and a measure of success.

The ongoing revolution in global communications coupled with the introduction of new information technologies is a sign of change that is slowly creating the avenue for the Nigerian media to change the course of history and advance the course of women. Efforts must be made to grant equal access to women so that they can partake in the new information technology that will further widen their horizons and become contributors to the continuing development of the media infrastructure in Nigeria. It must be noted here that unless alternative and more challenging views of women can be portrayed in a positive light devoid of any stereotypic innuendos, these problems will continue to persist even for the journalistic-minded women who had all the right stuff, but deprived of the chance to make the profession one that is limitless. Boulding (1973) said in an eloquent passage that, "the meaning of a message is the change it produces in the image" (p. 7). Let us hope that change will occur in the Nigeria media.

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