

Career Considerations in Journalism among Female Mass Communication Students of Redeemers University

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Abstract

From the inception of Journalism as an area of specialization in Mass Communication studies among Nigerian universities in the 1960s, enrolments have been largely populated by female students. Studies have found that only few of these female students opt for a career in journalism upon graduation. This study sought find out the perception of female students of Mass Communication on the career opportunities for the female journalist in Nigeria, if these students would consider a career in journalism, the specific career options they would consider, and the factor(s) that inform their decision. It is an important area study, as the findings provide significant information of relevance to the development of journalism in Nigeria. Adopting the survey research methodology, a sample size of 100 female students was randomly selected from a population of 163 female students across the four levels (100 – 400) from Redeemers University (RUN). The findings reveal that the students are not oblivious of the fact that career development for female journalists in Nigeria is challenged by the fact that they do not enjoy the same career opportunities as their male counterpart, and the family responsibility of a woman also makes it difficult to adequately fulfil the career expectations required in journalism. However, majority (63%) of them perceive Journalism to be a good profession for women, and 58% would positively consider a career in journalism, especially in the area of photojournalism. Majority (52%) of these students are interested in journalism because it would afford them the opportunity to gain diversified knowledge.

Keywords: Journalism, Mass Communication, Career Opportunities and Options, Photojournalism

1. Introduction

Journalism is a very important institution in every society. It is the practice of investigating and reporting newsworthy events of human interest as they occur through the mass media. Journalists' can be said to mirror the society through their reports and discourse of issues which span from diverse areas of the polity. Okoro and Chinweobo-Onuoha (2013), define journalism to be a veritable tool for information dissemination, social mobilization and control. It is a means of public education and sensitization on important issues affecting the lives of the people.

The advent of journalism in Nigeria in the mid nineteenth century 'was marked by a dominance of non-professionals who used their publications either to propagate a cause or to trade punches with colonial authorities'. The study of journalism in Nigeria began in the early 1960s. At the time, there were only two tertiary institutions offering courses in journalism –University of Nigeria (Nsukka) which began in 1961 and University of Lagos in 1967. These institutions introduced diploma in Mass Communication under which students took courses in journalism. Initially, candidates were reluctant to enroll in journalism as the preferred career choice back then were: medicine, engineering, law and architecture (Emenyeonu, 1991). Presently, the contrary is the case as there seems to be a fascination in the study of Mass Communication which is witnessing an explosive upsurge in the population of candidates (mostly by the female gender), such that the discipline has become a selling-point for most universities in Nigeria.

Although there are far more female students in the discipline of mass communication, studies have revealed that only few of these ladies become journalists. According to Ali (2010), diverse survey conducted across various institutions that offer journalism in Nigeria reveal that the population of female students significantly out number their male colleagues, but only few of these ladies follow through to have a career in journalism as they have been found to prefer to take-on careers in other specialisations of: broadcasting, advertising, public relations, and production.

This study sought to find out the perception of female students of Mass Communication on the career opportunities for the female journalist in Nigeria, if these students would consider a career in journalism, the specific career options they would consider, and the factor(s) that inform their decision using Redeemers University (RUN) as case study.

2. Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated:

1. What is the level of awareness of journalism career opportunities by female mass communication

- students of RUN?
2. What career option(s) in journalism appeal to the female students of RUN?
 3. What is their perception of career development for women in journalism?
 4. What factors inform their career consideration in journalism?

3. Theoretical framework

The study was anchored on the Perception theory of communication by Berelson and Steiner. The theory examines the complex process by which individuals select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. Perception involves the processes of: selective exposure- paying attention to media messages that are in agreement to already conceived attitude, selective attention –paying attention to certain aspects of media messages that are consonant with strongly held beliefs/ behaviour, and selective retention –the recall of information based on the need for such information (Anaeto, Osifeso and Onabajo, 2008 p.66 & 68).

Although the theory is often directly applicable to studies on media effect, it is considered applicable to this study in that the manner in which female mass communication students perceive journalism as well as their career consideration is determined by any of the three selective processes of perception as informed by the information they have been exposed to on journalism, their interaction with journalists and personal convictions of the profession.

4. Literature Review

Journalism is a media profession which offers a variety of career possibilities. According to Ekeli and Enobakhare (2013), although there are many career variations in journalism, the ideal is to adequately inform the intended audience about topical issues within the society. Journalism serves many useful and vital functions such as: informing the public about facts and events that are important, provide forum for diverse viewpoints, serve as watchdog of the government, institutions and the public, advocate change in public interest, and pursue the truth with unwavering commitment. What makes a good journalist irrespective of the career option is the ability to: write excellently, handle a heavy workload and stress, work experience, diversity of knowledge, and most importantly a nose for news.

Some specific career options in journalism include: reporting, investigative journalism, photojournalism, columnist, analysts and the list goes on. Aina (2004 p.210) distinguished some of the careers in journalism: a reporter is a journalist who seeks out some information using research and interviews. Reporters write reports (news stories) on events, occurrences and prominent individuals within the society. They are also known as correspondents; the investigative journalist is a journalist who presents a more systemized approach to journalism. Investigative journalism requires ‘a keener news-sense’ than the conventional news reporting technique. It is also considered to be one of the most risky careers in journalism because it seeks ‘to ferret out the news behind the news or the big secret the source has vowed to conceal’.

There are also journalists who are columnist. The word column as far as the media is concerned connotes delegating specific pages of the newspaper to specified topical issues, written regularly over a long period of time. There are opinion column, editorial column, sports, business, but to mention a few. Journalists do not run column for expressing personal opinion. However with technology, journalists can do this through their blogs and social media. Columns also allow for interaction with the reading public (p.230).

Photojournalism involves taking newsworthy pictures. Photojournalists are professional photographers unlike other journalists. Photojournalism as defined by Ojomo (2008 p.17) is ‘telling a story with photographs – reporting with the aid of picture’. The photojournalist is guided by purpose, and this sets his job apart from other professional photographers. There are also analysts in journalism. These journalists work on a variety of beats as either: political analyst, entertainment analyst, business analyst, sport analyst, educational analyst.

4.1 Women and Journalism

The profession of journalism is one that has been largely dominated by the male gender over the years. Ememyeonu (1991) in a study on factors that motivate Nigerian female students at the tertiary level to take up journalism training discovered that most female students surveyed consider journalism to be a profession as much suited for women as for men. However, they would prefer more glamorous roles in television, radio, public relations or advertising to aspects of journalism such as reporting. Furthermore, in another study, he tried to determine the perception of mass communication students on the performance of Nigerian female journalists. 55% respondents were of the opinion that Nigerian female journalists were as good and as productive as their male colleagues.

In some countries, the media is growing and allowing for the entry of more women in journalism. According to Rauhala, Lindgren, and Fatima (2012) The Canadian media has allowed for more women to enter the profession especially in journalism but the challenge still remains that the role of the female journalist seems misunderstood or underexplored. In 2011, The Ryerson Journalism Research Centre gathered over 200 journalists and journal-

ism students to discuss dilemmas facing women—from covering high-risk events, equality in newsrooms, and balancing parenthood with careers. However, female journalists are not assigned to influential beats such as politics and crime which remain male-dominated. Also, women remain underrepresented in top management positions.

Also, Russia is experiencing a feminization of journalism which is yielding a steadily increasing female presence in Russian journalism. According to Smirnova (2013), the feminization of journalism was as a result of its social and political transformations rather than as a vindication of women's rights. All journalists irrespective of gender are subject to gender stereotypes that inevitably have an impact on the product they create as well as on their own position and self-realization in their profession.

Other studies have shown that women are also leaving journalism for other media careers such as broadcasting, production, or totally going through a total change in career. Everbach & Flournoy (2007) as cited by Rauhala, Lindgren, and Fatima (2012) in a 2005 survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors found that women were leaving journalism earlier than men. Many attributed their departures to the fact that male journalists were consistently offered better jobs and pay than young women. Also in Nigerian, female journalists are switching career to academics because of the challenges they face in the media.

4.2 Challenges of Female Journalists

Studies have shown that majority of the issues which constitute a barrier to career development for female journalists are largely gender related. According to Okunna (2000) in Ali (2010 p.35), 'gender relations in Nigeria are characterised by a lot of imbalance to the disadvantaged of women. Tradition, culture, religion, and other factors have continued to widen the disparity between Nigerian men and women whereby women are kept in subordinate positions'. Female journalists are often stereotyped into specific careers/ beats that are considered to be less demanding. Amao (1999) in Ali (p.41) states that the female gender is perceived to be biologically unfit to execute assignments which come with being a journalist. For instance, from way back, female journalists were hardly given beats in areas considered to be 'masculine' such as: political analysis, photojournalism, and sports.

Also, Hardin and Shain (2005) citing Seattle Post-Intelligencer (3 June 2005), reports that an informal survey of 50 high-circulation newspaper sports departments in 2001 showed that women constituted just 13 percent of employees, mostly as clerks, copy editors and reporters. Also, more recent report revealed that just 11 percent of employees in sports departments are women. The domination of the news media by men is yet another challenge to career advancement of women in journalism. Ferri and Keller (1986) as cited in Ememyeonu (1991) sampled 136 female full-time news anchors in commercial television stations. Majority of them stressed the fact that even the audience (the public) would rather ask their male counterpart for the latest 'hot' story.

Another challenge is the multiple roles and heavy domestic responsibilities they are expected to carry out. Also, Uzochkwu (2008) in Ali (2010), alludes to the fact that women often lack the time to adequately and thoroughly pay attention to the expectations of journalism profession unlike their male counterparts. The traditional role of a woman especially in Africa whereby a woman is expected to cater to the children, carryout certain home chores and also provide meals for the family become a distraction in journalism, and a s such makes it difficult for female journalists to devote as much time as men would do.

In Ememyeonu's (1991) opinion, the lack of adequate representation of women in journalism is partly as a result of the marital obligations of women which tend to occupy the time they need they need to devote to their job. According to Wljngaard (1992 p. 53), 'Journalism is a profession where great value is attached to such qualities as a critical yet objective standpoint, an independent attitude, and an almost full-time, availability for and dedication to the profession'. Scholars have arrived at the conclusion that the African culture and role of women makes it difficult for women to meet these expectations.

Very few journalists begin their careers in their idealized position but at low-level entry job positions which is not the case in other professions. Becoming a well-paid journalist is a long arduous process. Most successful journalists began at the bottom and spend years working their way up to where they are today. Unfortunately, very few female journalists rise to top managerial positions throughout their career.

The issue of sexual harassment is yet another challenge for women in journalism. Female journalists have to deal with request for sexual favours from bosses irrespective of their marital status.

5. Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design using structured questionnaire data gathering instrument. A sample size of one hundred (100) female mass communication students of Redeemers University (RUN) were conveniently selected from a total population of one hundred and sixty three female students (163); 25 girls in 100 level, 56 in 200 level, 20 in 300 level, 22 in 400 level. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) was used to process the data which is presented using Pie and Bar charts.

6. Presentation of Data

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of journalism career opportunities by female mass communication students of RUN?

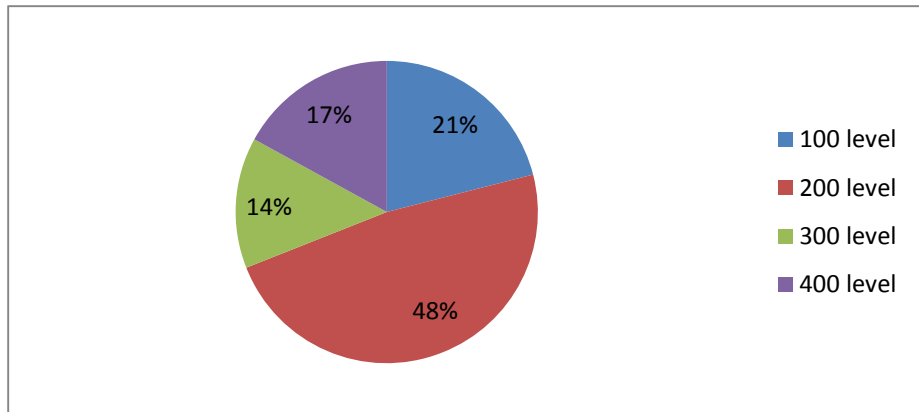


Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Level

Analysis

Figure 1 presents the distribution of respondents who participated in this study by class level. It shows that of the 100 respondents who participated in this study, 21 (21%) were 100 level students, 48 (48%) in 200 level, 14 (14%) in 300 level, and 17 (17%) in 400 level. Therefore, majority of the respondents in this study were 200 level students. This is because of the fact that of the four levels, there are more female mass communication students at Redeemers University in 200 level.

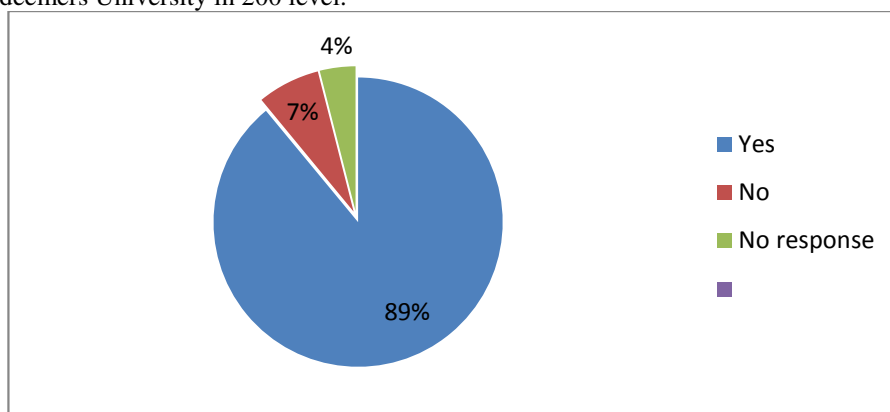


Figure 2: Respondents Awareness of Careers in Journalism

Analysis

Figure 2 shows that 89(89%) of the respondent in this study are aware that there are various career options available in journalism, 7(7%) are not aware, while 4(4%) did not respond to this question. Therefore, majority of the female mass communication students at RUN are aware that there are various career options in journalism.

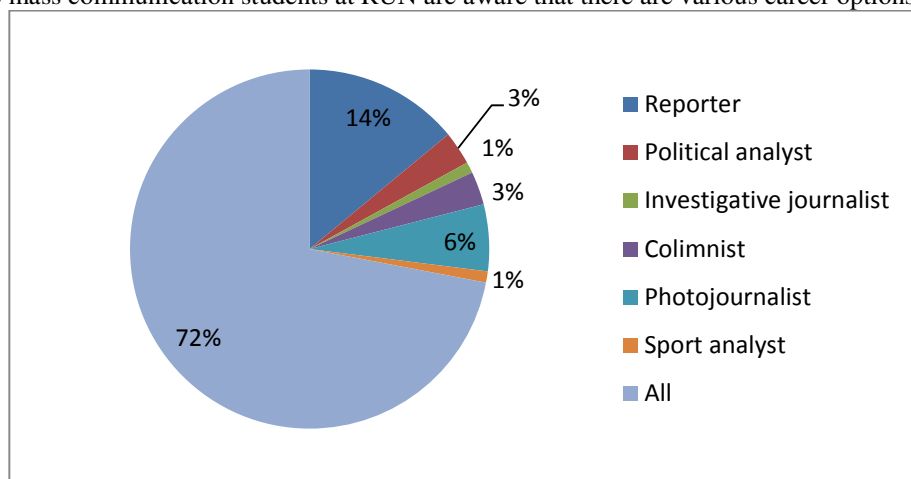


Figure 3: Respondents Awareness of Specified Career Options in Journalism

Analysis

Figure 3 presents the specific career options available in journalism which the respondents are aware of. 14(14%) are aware of the career option of a Reporter, 3 (3%) are aware of Political analysts, 1 (1%) is aware of Investigative journalism, 3(3%) are aware of Columnist, 6(6%) are aware of Photojournalists, 1(1%) is aware of Sport analyst, while 72(72%) are aware of all the enlisted career options in journalism. The findings reveal that majority (72%) of the female students of RUN are fully aware of all the diverse career options available in journalism.

Research Question 2: What career option(s) in journalism appeal to the female students of RUN?

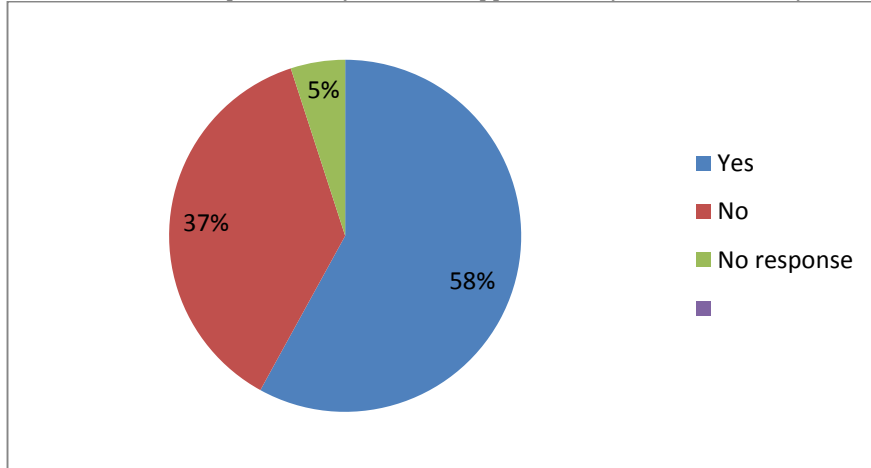


Figure 4: Respondents interest in Journalism

Analysis

Figure 4 shows that 58(58%) respondents are interested journalism career, 37(37%) respondents are not interested in journalism career, while 5(5%) did not respond. Therefore, majority of female mass communication students at RUN would consider a career in journalism.

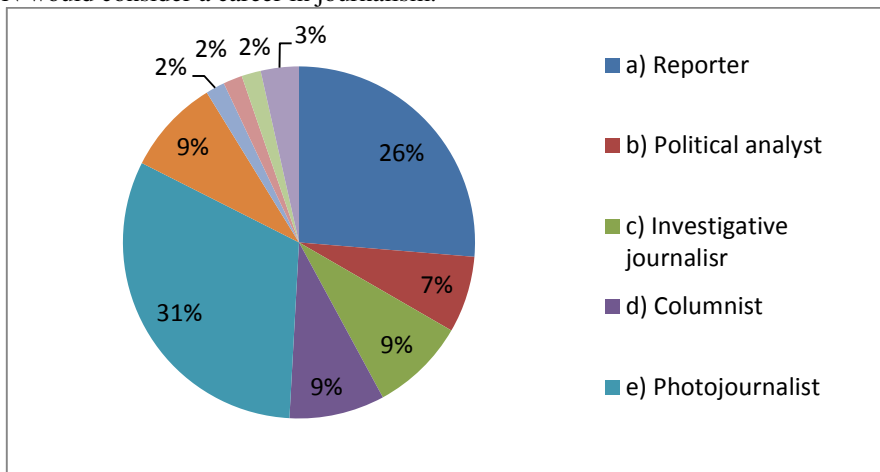


Figure 5: Respondents Specified Area of Career Interest

Analysis

Figure 5 shows the career option that appeal to the 58 (58%) respondents who are interested in journalism career. 15(26%) respondents would like to be Reporters, 4(7%) Political analysts, 5(9%) Investigative journalists, 5(9%) Columnists, 18(32%) Photojournalists, 5(9%) Sport analysts, 1(2%) a Freelance journalist, 1(2%) a reporter/columnist/Photojournalist, 1(2%) a political analyst/columnist/sport analyst, and 2(3%) an investigative journalist/ photojournalist. Therefore, majority of the female mass communication students at RUN would like to be photojournalists.

Research Question 3: What is their perception of career development for women in journalism?

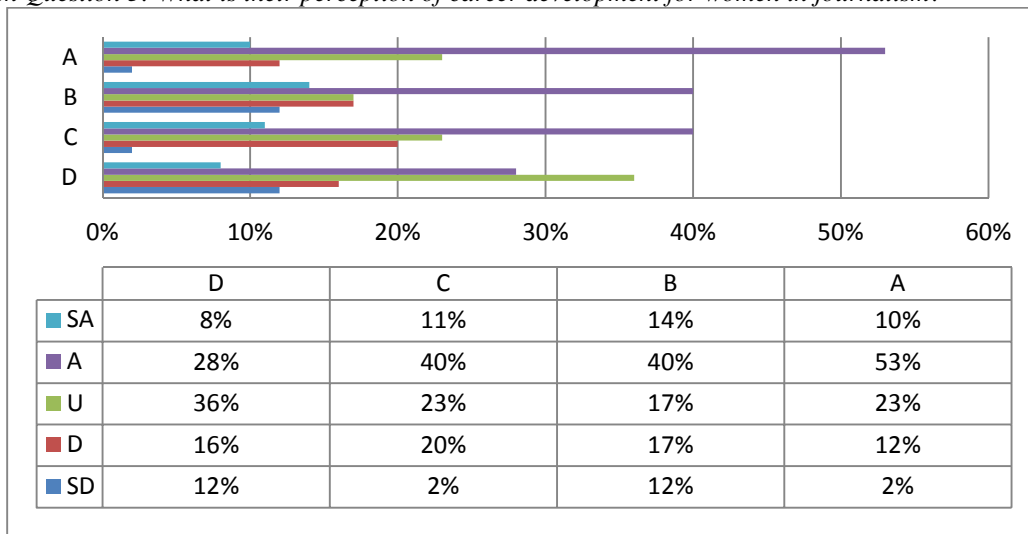


Figure 6: Respondents Perception of Career Development for Women in Journalism

- A – Journalism is a good profession for women;
- B – Female journalists do not have equal career opportunities as men;
- C – Family responsibility is a barrier to career advancement for female journalists
- D – Female journalist does not have after paid employment utility as male journalists

Analysis

Figure 6 presents respondents perception of career development for female journalists in Nigeria;

- i. 10(10%) respondents strongly agree that journalism is a good profession for women, 53(53%) agree, 23(23%) are undecided, 12(12%) disagree, and 2(2%) strongly disagree. Therefore, majority (63%) of female mass communication students of RUN perceive journalism to be a good profession for women.
- ii. 14(14%) respondents strongly agree that female journalists do not have equal career opportunities as male journalists, 40(40%) agree, 17(17%) are undecided, 17(17%) disagree, while 12(12%) strongly disagree. Therefore, majority 54(54%) perceive female journalists to have less career opportunities in journalism that male journalists.
- iii. 11(11%) respondents strongly agree that family responsibility is a barrier to career advancement for female journalists, 40(40%) agree, 23(23%) are undecided, 20(20%) disagree, and 2(2%) strongly disagree. Therefore majority (51%) of female mass communication students of RUN perceive family responsibility to be a barrier to career advancement for female journalists.
- iv. 8(8%) respondents strongly agree that female journalist do not have after paid employment utility as male journalists, 28(28%) agree, 36(36%) are undecided, 16(16%) disagree, and 12(12%) strongly disagree. Therefore, most (36%) female students at RUN do not have an idea of the after paid-employment utility of female journalists.

Research Question 4: What factors inform their career consideration in journalism?

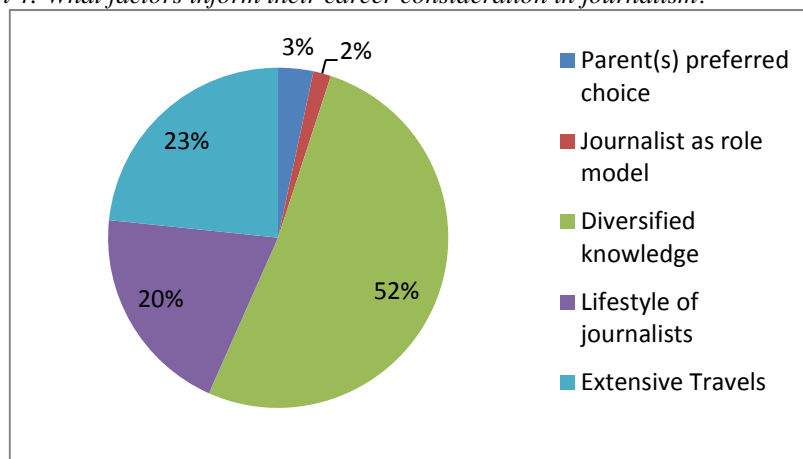


Figure 7: Factors Responsible for Positive Career Interest in Journalism

Analysis

Figure 7 shows that 2(3%) respondents want to be journalists because it is their parent(s) preferred career choice, 1(2%) because of a role model who is a journalist, 31(52%) because journalists are knowledgeable in diversified fields, 12(20%) because they admire the lifestyle of journalists, and 14(23%) because of the extensive travels involved in the job. Therefore, the career consideration in journalism by female mass communication students of RUN is most influenced by the fact that journalists are knowledgeable in diversified fields of life.

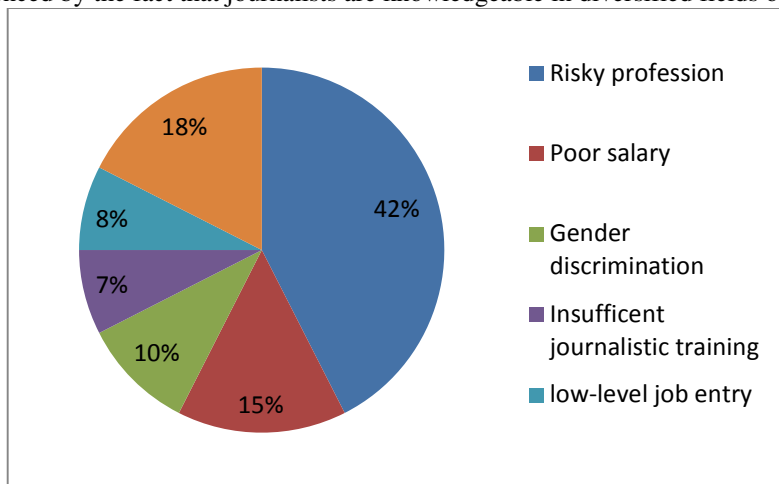


Figure 8: Factors Responsible for the Lack of Interest in Journalism

Analysis

Figure 8 show that 17(45%) respondents do not consider a career in journalism because it is a risky profession, 6(15%) because journalists are poorly paid, 4(10%) because female journalists are discriminated against, 3(8%) because of insufficient journalistic training presented by the department of mass communication, 3(8%) because journalists begin at low –level entry jobs unlike other professions, and 7(18%) due to all the reasons enlisted. Therefore, most female mass communication students of RUN who will not consider a career in journalism lack interest in the career because perceive journalism to be a high risk profession.

7. Discussion of Major Findings

The following findings were made in this study;

1. The findings of this study reveals that majority (89%) of the female mass communication students of RUN are aware that there are diverse career options in journalism. 72% of them are aware of the various career options as discussed by Aina (2004) and Ojomo (2008) such as: Reporting, Political analyst, Investigative journalist, Columnist, Photojournalism, Sport analyst. This shows that the students are well educated on the various career options available in the journalism profession.
2. Majority (58%) of the female mass communication students of RUN would positively consider a career in journalism. This alludes to the findings of Ememyeonu (1991) that most female students of mass communication consider journalism to a profession suited for both the male and female gender. Also, photojournalism and reporting were found to be the most predominant positively considered areas of career in journalism among the female students of RUN at 32% and 26%.
3. Majority (63%) of the female mass communication students of RUN perceive journalism to be a good profession for women. However, they perceive the career development for women in journalism to be limited the challenges of female journalists especially the stereotyping of the female gender as discussed by Okunna (2000) as cited by Ali (2010), which prevents equality in career development for female journalists and their male colleagues. Also, the family responsibility of a woman was also perceived to be another major challenge to the career development of female journalists as 51%.
4. Lastly, while the fact that a career in journalism ensues diversified knowledge was the major influencing factor for a positive career consideration in journalism among the female mass communication students of RUN at 52%, the risk involved in the profession was the major discouraging factor against a positive career consideration in journalism for 42% of the female students of mass communication in RUN.

8. Conclusion

This study sought to determine the career consideration of female mass communication students of Redeemers University. The objective was to find out if the students were aware of the diverse career options available in

journalism, if they would like to be professional journalists and the career option that most appeals to them, factors that influence their decision for and against taking up a career in journalism, and their perception of the career development for women in journalism.

The findings of this study revealed that most female mass communication students would positively consider a career in journalism; especially in the area of photojournalism. These students are interested in the profession because it would afford them the opportunity to gain diversified knowledge, non-the-less, they are not oblivious of the fact that male journalists are advantaged over female journalists. The level of career development for women in journalism is challenged by the fact female journalists do not enjoy the same career opportunities as their male counterpart, and the family responsibility of a woman also makes it difficult for her to adequately meet fulfil the career expectations required in journalism.

9. Recommendation

Although majority of the students would positively consider a career in journalism, there are certain pertinent factors as identified that are responsible for a lack of interest by other students in journalism and it is height time that these factors are considered and tackled. Female journalists should not be treated as second hand in the profession; it is the responsibility of already practicing female journalists to clamour against this discrimination so as to pave the way for their successors and make journalism more attractive to young mass communication students.

The study also recommends further studies to examine the career experience/ development of female journalists in Nigeria.

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