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The Impact of Motherhood on the Career Development of Female Journalists in Nigeria

Ijeoma Loveleen Okereke-Adagba^{1*}

¹ Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development, Abuja 904101, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria.

* Author for Correspondence Email: okerekeijeoma17@gmail.com

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Journalism has been described as a very demanding job, and this demand is heightened when marriage and motherhood are put into context. This is because the Nigerian culture has placed the burden of home and childcare majorly at the feet of women, making it very difficult to break the glass ceiling for women journalists working in the Nigerian news media. This study sought to investigate the impact of motherhood on the career progression of female journalists working in Nigerian newsrooms. The online survey research method was employed to sample 112 female journalists, who are mothers, working in Nigerian newsrooms. It was found that the majority of female journalists have more than one child and took maternity leave for up to 3 months but have declined numerous opportunities as a result of childcare responsibilities. The challenges experienced by respondents include inability to find affordable childcare services, frustration and burnout, declined access to opportunities and training, absence of flexible work options and slow career progression. The study recommends that media owners should support female journalists with children by creating space for crèche/day-care with an experienced day-care service provider so that nursing mothers can be able to access their children promptly. Employers can increase the salaries of workers such that their monthly wage is not affected as a result of childcare services. Furthermore, to foster an environment where women can thrive in their media careers, organisations must critically review existing policies and structures that disadvantage women.

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INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is a life-changing experience that has a profound impact on various aspects of a woman's life, including her career growth. Nigerian women face unique challenges when it comes to balancing their roles as mothers and advancing in their careers, as highlighted by recent studies Rowe et al. (2023) and Ibarra et al. (2013). The studies revealed that organisational structures were originally developed to fit men's lives and situations, enabling non-family-friendly policies for working mothers to rise in their careers and making women work extra hard to be recognised.

These challenges are thought to arise from inadequate support for working mothers by employers, limited access to high-quality childcare, and cultural expectations that place women as primary caregivers. For instance, in China, women, who make up to 40% of the overall workforce in journalism, occupy roles with lower pay and less power (Wang, 2019). In Ghana, only female journalists working as regional correspondents tend to have more work-life balance. At the same time, those in the city are subjected to emotional stress, guilt and self-condemnation due to social obligations (Boateng & Lauk, 2020). Research conducted by Ross and Padovani (2019) showed that women only occupy one-third of senior positions, and only 15% hold the position of CEOs in organisations surveyed in Europe. In Arab, there is a significant motherhood penalty in the middle-income range and a significant fatherhood bonus in the high-income range for women journalists and news managers (Melki & Hitti, 2021).

In a semi-structured interview conducted for sports female journalists by Organista and Mazur (2020) in Poland, female journalists must adapt to the patriarchal culture in sports newsrooms, making it hard for them to combine professional practice with maternal plans. In Nigeria, media

editors claim that women journalists get the help they need but some of them take the system for granted and request frivolous concessions and considerations, branding them as 'excuse peddlers' (Tijani-Adenle, 2019). Consequently, these factors can impede career progression, decrease earning potential over time, and result in feelings of frustration and burnout (Mason & Ekman, 2007).

In addition, research has also shown that motherhood can have both positive and negative impacts on women's career development. For example, studies such as King, Botsford, and Huffman (2009) have found that some women experience career interruptions and fewer opportunities for advancement after becoming mothers. However, other research studies, such as McIntosh et al. (2012) and Tlaiss et al. (2011) suggest that motherhood can provide women with valuable skills and perspectives, such as time management, multi-tasking, and problem-solving, that can enhance their career prospects.

Despite the volume of literature around the impact of motherhood across the world, as the world changes and continues to be impacted by globalisation and its attendant challenges and digital innovation, among others, there continues to be a need for real-time, contextual understanding of these challenges, especially in a clime like Nigeria where there's insufficient gendered data to drive policy interventions and influence decision-making.

This study aims to investigate the impact of motherhood on the career progression of female journalists working in Nigerian newsrooms. The term "journalist" encompasses a wide range of roles, such as reporters, feature writers, photographers, videographers, editors, news directors, bureau chiefs, section editors, online editors, sub-editors (or copy editors), presenters, producers, television news anchors, columnists, and others (North, 2014).

This examines the numerous challenges that Nigerian women in the media encounter due to their roles as mothers and examines the strategies they have employed to overcome these obstacles and achieve career advancement. Additionally, it makes recommendations that employers should adopt to enable working mothers in the newsrooms to balance motherhood and career.

The study will be significant in addressing the gap in the existing literature, which has primarily focused on the gendered nature of media production processes, gender-pay gaps, and the experiences of women in the news industry and not specifically, the impact motherhood has on career development of female journalists working in the media industry. Furthermore, previous research has highlighted the existence of a “motherhood penalty” in various fields, including medicine (Hoffman et al., 2021), academics (El-Far et al., 2021; Eva et al., 2021), employment (Correll et al., 2007), and construction (Mbalenhle et al., 2011) and its impacts on the career decisions of women in general. However, other studies on this topic have primarily been conducted in the global North (U.S, UK etc.). This study explores the experiences, challenges and impact of motherhood on female journalists in the Nigerian news media industry. The study underpins the nuances female journalists who are mothers face daily in their careers, such as lack of access to maternity care, limited career development opportunities, frustration, and burnout. Understanding these challenges is essential to crafting better policies and establishing structures that affect motherhood in newsrooms.

Research Objectives

- To identify the peculiar challenges experienced by Nigerian women in the media in managing the dual roles of motherhood and career development.
- To analyse the impact of motherhood on the career advancement of Nigerian women in the media.
- To identify organisational policies and practices in Nigerian media houses that either facilitate or hinder the career progression of women following motherhood.
- To recommend policies and practices that news media organisations can use to support mothers in the industry

LITERATURE REVIEW

Journalism has been described as a very demanding job, and this demand is heightened when marriage and motherhood are put into context. This is because the Nigerian culture has placed the burden of home and childcare majorly at the feet of women, making it very difficult to break the glass ceiling for women journalists working in the Nigerian news media (Tijani-Adenle, 2019). Globally, women’s experience of journalism practice has been studied, and the results are always similar: “sticky floors, glass ceilings, gender pay gaps, unfair dismissal around maternity, lack of access to jobs or training, bullying, harassment and increasing violence” (Ran, 2015, p. 53).

Female roles as mothers and wives, religious and cultural beliefs, and poor salary/wages are some of the critical factors impeding women mass communication graduates from adopting journalism-related careers (Ibrahim et al., 2021) despite surpassing their male counterparts in journalism schools (Apuke & Dogari, 2016; Licia, 2021). This conflict is further exacerbated by limited access to quality childcare, lack of supportive policies in the workplace, and cultural norms prioritising family over career. Feminist media researchers have long identified that women journalists are disadvantaged because they have to juggle family and career responsibilities together in an industry that does not grant adequate concessions for child care or family responsibilities and in which women journalists with children are sidelined to the soft beats or denied promotions (Organ et al., 1979; Lafky, 1991; Sieghart & Henry, 1998; Franks, 2013). Unlike the regular 9 am - 5 pm jobs, Journalism does not support the ‘regular’ child-care options available (Williams, 2010).

“It is unfortunate women’s promotional opportunities are affected by their child or children, but I do understand and accept why; simply put, a person can’t be in two places at once, even if they want to be. It seems more women than men take on the primary carer role while still trying to be the peak performance journo she used to be. It can’t work, and I think news managers sense that.”
[Quote from Louise North’s Still a ‘blokes club’: The motherhood dilemma in journalism (2016c, p. 325)].

Despite these limitations, women have made significant inroads into news journalism’s lower and middle ranks, creating gendered news hierarchies (North, 2014). This gendered hierarchy has been evidenced by the 2020 Global Media Monitoring Report (GMMP), which shows a significant decline of 42 percent of female reporters and presenters in the television medium from the year 2015 to 2020 in Nigeria newsrooms. One of the major challenges confronting the sector, like every other sector in Nigeria, is the lack of data; however, the media industry continues to lose women journalists who are in the child-bearing and rearing stages. Unlike men who do not have to choose between home and work, mothers in the media tend to keep their jobs for the sake of working and earning salaries (over 60 million Nigerians are unemployed). Still, they cannot aspire to reach top management positions. This significantly impacts the status of women in the industry (Tijani-Adenle, 2019).

Again, with insufficient data to show the number of media organisations owned by women and the number of women working in the Nigeria media industry, available data indicates that women continue to remain the minority in newsrooms and news management structures, where only 33% of managers are women globally (GMMP Report, 2020). This gender gap has influenced how media editors perceive women journalists. Some downplay it by suggesting a lack of women in top jobs is ‘unintentional’ or not linked to gender bias per se but rather that women themselves decide that they don’t want to work in a blokey culture (North, 2014). In a study conducted by Tijani-Adenle (2019), media editors see women as

excuse peddlers once marriage and children come into the picture. They claim that women journalists get the help they need, but some of them take the system for granted and request frivolous concessions and considerations. One of the key informants (an editor) in the research speaks thus:

‘We are thinking of limiting the number of women we are going to employ. Why? It is very obvious. Most of them will get married, and most of them will go on maternity leave for three months; who is going to cover it for them? So those are the things we’ve looked at, and we now resolved that okay, we are going to stop recruiting women for now. It is not that we are not going to recruit women anyway, but we are going to recruit more men than women’.

This is not to discard the fact that many media organisations in Nigeria have instituted paid maternity leave policies ranging from 3 - 6 months, but the fact that once these women return to work, they are either reassigned ‘softer’ roles or are not assigned tasks that they deserve. In addition, the rigid nature of the newsrooms where routines such as deadlines have been engrained makes women self-select away from advancement rather than over-commit - this childcare dilemma forces them to do so (North, 2014). These actions (and difficult choices) invariably take a toll on their career growth in the organisation.

“I don’t think there is such a thing as balance because women always feel guilty. Even if you do something fifty-fifty, you split your time and your life so that you’re giving your time in equal amounts to family and work - we are high-guilt creatures... it’s just a matter of making it work’
(Quote from Jacinda Ardern in Women and Leadership by Julia Gillard and Ngozi-Okonjo Iweala, 2020 p. 197)

Recognising these glass ceilings, these women have fallen back to their support systems. These support systems include extended family relatives, paid caregivers (nannies/babysitters), friends and family members. It, therefore, means that only women journalists with understanding husbands and very strong support systems are able

to keep their homes and progress professionally while in young marriages or with young children (Tijani-Adenle, 2019). Motherhood, in this way, is placed firmly in the domestic sphere, out of the labour force and therefore out of the 'choices' of organisations to support women who care for children as they do women and men who do not care for children (North, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

In undertaking this study, a quantitative research methodology was employed to answer the four overarching questions. Google Forms was used to develop an online questionnaire. This questionnaire, combining demographic data and closed-ended questions, was put out on Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp groups and Facebook. The researcher targeted female journalists who are mothers working in Nigerian newsrooms. The online questionnaire ran from 7th June - 4th July 2023.

Sampling Technique

The study used a purposive sampling technique to select participants who meet the eligibility criteria. The online survey was specifically targeted at female journalists who are mothers working in the print, broadcast and online media industries in Nigeria.

Sample Size

The data for this study were obtained from a sample of 112 participants. Due to the unavailability of publicly accessible information on the number of female journalists, particularly those who are mothers working in Nigerian newsrooms, the researcher was confined to the data collected from this survey, which is the first of its kind.

Data Collection

The research study employed an online survey as the primary method for data collection. The survey consisted of structured questions aimed at gathering quantitative data on the career development of women in the media industry following motherhood. To ensure alignment with the research objectives, relevant questions directly

addressing the key aims of the study were incorporated into the questionnaire, serving as the instrument for data collection. The Likert 5-point scale was adopted to measure respondents' perceptions, opinions and behaviours in some questions. For the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed, respondents' anonymity has been maintained throughout this report.

Reliability and Validity of the Study

Reliability

The reliability of the online survey was enhanced by using closed-ended questions with standardised response options. This approach minimises ambiguity and ensures consistency in how participants interpret and respond to the questions (Dillman et al., 2014). Additionally, the survey was distributed online, reducing the potential for errors in data entry and ensuring a standardised data collection process.

Validity

The validity of the study was addressed through several measures. First, the questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive literature review, ensuring that the questions aligned with the existing body of knowledge on the topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Second, the survey questions were designed to directly address the research objectives, enhancing the study's internal validity. Third, the purposive sampling technique ensured that the participants were relevant to the research topic, increasing the study's external validity (Palinkas et al., 2015). However, the study acknowledges the limitation of the small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research with a larger and more diverse sample could further strengthen the study's validity.

Data Analysis

All the collected data were subjected to an Excel spreadsheet where each answer was categorised based on the responses. These responses were further visualised using descriptive statistical tools such as Bar Charts, Tables and Pie Charts.

For each visualisation, there was a concise description and discussion of findings.

KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this session, responses from participants will be analysed and discussed based on the research objectives.

Demographic Distribution

Age

Of the total respondents, 53.6% are between 35 and 44 years old; 20.5% are between 45 and 54 years old; 18.8% are between 25 and 34 years old and 7.1% are between 55 years and above (see *Table 1*). This implies that the majority of female journalists who are working mothers in Nigeria are young, agile and of child-bearing age. However, it is also essential to recognize the diversity within this group, which includes both experienced individuals with established careers and emerging talents who bring fresh perspectives to the field. This comprehensive understanding of the age distribution among working mothers in journalism allows for a more nuanced evaluation of their contributions and challenges in the Nigerian media landscape. Although the sample size of this research is small, it is important to note that the spread of respondents by age seems to agree with existing knowledge that less and less women stay in the journalism profession as they grow older.

Educational Qualification

Data in *Table 1* shows that 42% of the respondents have a master's degree; bachelor's degree 42%; ND/HND 13.5% and PhD, 2.7%. Female journalists have a minimum educational background of a first degree, which qualifies them

to effectively practise their craft and contribute meaningfully to the Nigerian media landscape.

Medium

The provided data reveals interesting patterns among female journalists who are mothers in Nigeria. The analysis shows that a significant proportion of these journalists work in the broadcast sector, consisting of radio and television stations. Specifically, 45.5 percent of the total respondents fall into this category. This finding indicates that broadcast media are a popular career choice for female journalists. It is unclear though if this is an indication of the medium's accommodation for female journalists. While 32.1% work for print and 22.3% work for online news platforms (see *Table 1*).

Number Children

Out of all the surveyed individuals, 21.4 percent reported having only one child. Additionally, 32.1 percent of the respondents indicated having two children, while 26.8 percent reported having three children. Moreover, 15.2 percent of the participants stated that they have four children, and a smaller proportion of 4.5 percent revealed having more than five children (see *Table 1*). A key observation from this data is that the majority of female journalists who are mothers, specifically more than half of them, have more than one child. Combining the percentages of respondents with two, three, four, and more than five children amounts to a total of 78.6 percent. This indicates that a significant portion of the population under study has more than one child. These insights can be valuable to potentially contribute to discussions regarding the peculiar challenges and responsibilities faced by working mothers in the journalism field.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

	Variable	Frequency	Per cent
Age	18 - 24 yrs	0	0
	25 - 34 yrs	21	18.8
	35 - 44 yrs	60	53.6
	45 - 54 yrs	23	20.5
	55 yrs above	8	7.1
	Total	112	100

Variable		Frequency	Per cent
Educational qualification	Secondary certification	0	0
	Bsc	47	42
	Nd/hnd	15	13.3
	Masters	47	42
	Phd	3	2.7
	Total	112	100
Medium	Broadcast	51	45.5
	Print	36	32.1
	Online	25	22.3
	Total	112	100
Number children	1	24	21.4
	2	36	32.1
	3	30	26.8
	4	17	15.2
	5 and more	5	4.5
	Total	112	100

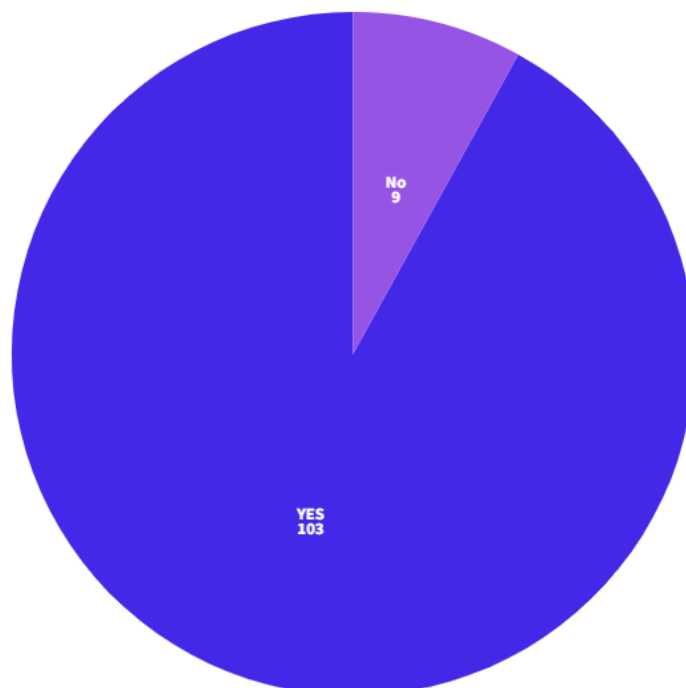
Maternity Leave

It is evident that a significant majority of the respondents, accounting for 92 percent of the sample size (103 individuals), reported taking maternity leave after giving birth (see *Figure 1*). This finding suggests that a substantial number of media houses have implemented maternity leave

policies for their female staff members. This is a positive indication of progress towards acknowledging and accommodating the challenges faced by women during childbirth. However, it is worth noting that 8 percent of the respondents did not take maternity leave. This finding is concerning considering the inherent difficulties associated with childbearing.

Figure 1: Maternity leave

Did you take maternity leave after having your child(ren)?



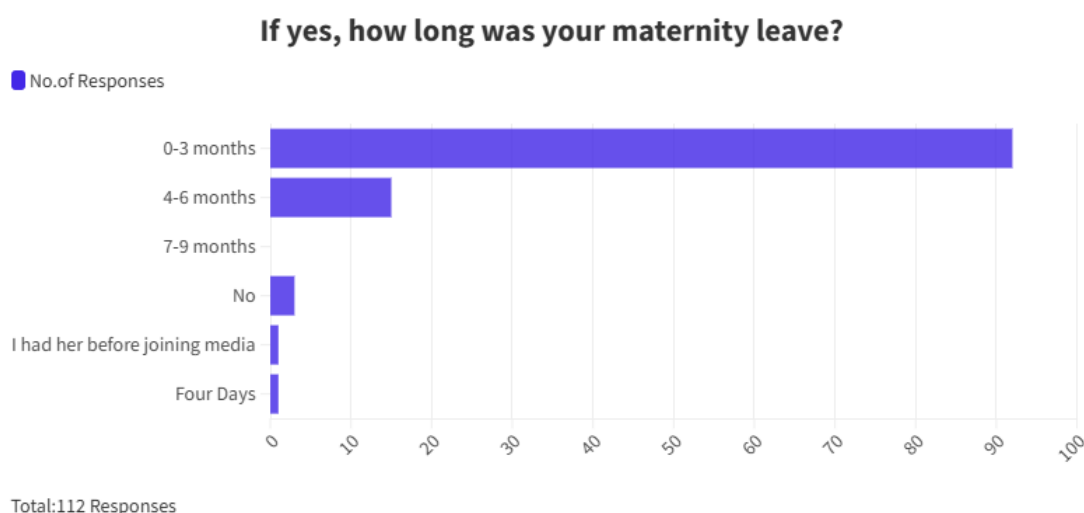
The graph highlights that a significant majority of respondents (103), comprising 82.2 percent, took

maternity leave for up to 3 months, which is the statutory maternity leave period in Nigeria by law

although the Federal Government announced 16-week maternity leave in 2018. This suggests that a substantial portion of media organisations have policies in place that support statutorily given maternity leaves (see *Figure 2*). In contrast, 13.4 percent of respondents reported taking maternity leave for a duration of 4 to 6 months. This

indicates that a smaller proportion of media organisations provide longer maternity leave to their employees. Longer maternity leave periods have been linked to various benefits, such as improved maternal and child health outcomes, increased bonding time, and reduced stress levels for new mothers (Berelson, 2012).

Figure 2: Length of Maternity Leave

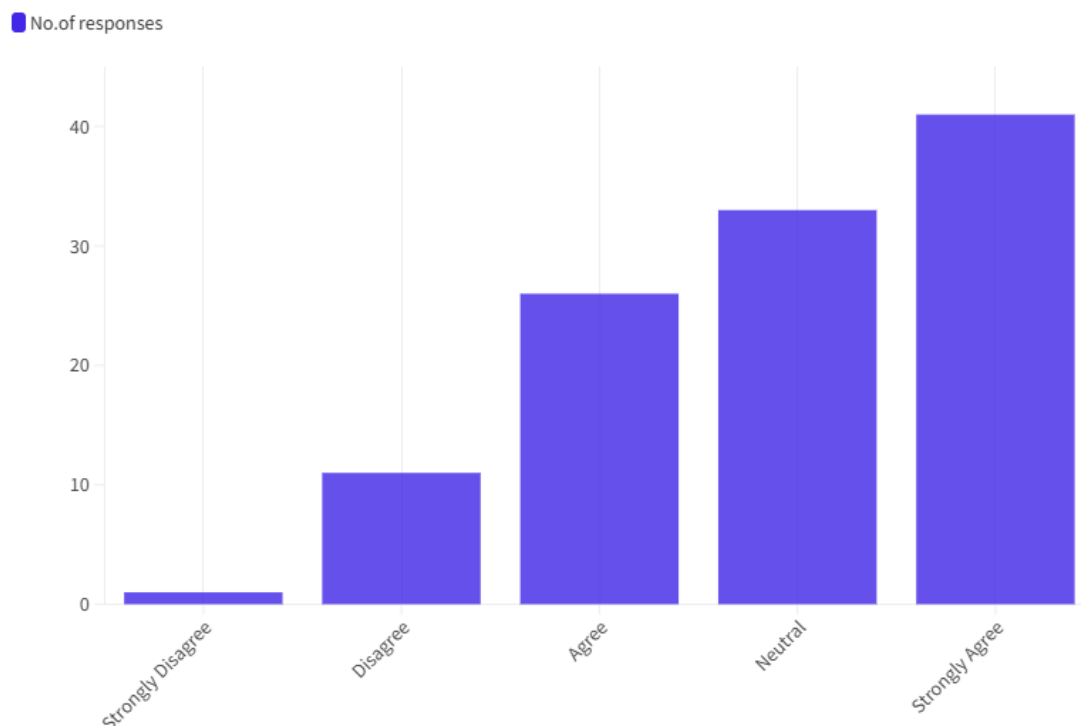


Despite the predominance of maternity leave among respondents, there are a few outliers which could be an indication that there are media organisations that do not offer maternity leave to staff. One respondent said she had no day off after giving birth while another said she only took four days off work after the birth of her baby.

It is important to note that labour laws in Nigeria, including such laws that guide on maternity leave, are typically binding on government institutions but much less so in privately owned organisations. Although the survey did not collect data on the nature of ownership of the media organisations respondents work in, examining the adoption of labour laws especially by privately-owned companies would shed even more light on an issue like provision of maternity leave.

Challenges Experienced Managing the Dual Roles of Motherhood and Career Development

In terms of balancing the dual roles of motherhood and career, the majority of respondents - 36.6% strongly agreed and 23.2% agreed that combining career and motherhood can be very challenging, compared to 29.5% who were neutral and 9.8% who found it less challenging. This result signifies that the majority of women considers managing motherhood to be a journalism career very tedious. This number is significant enough and is likely one of the reasons why fewer and fewer women progress higher in their careers and would account for the very low representation of women in management positions in media organisations.

Figure 3: Rate of how challenging it is to balance motherhood and career development**Balancing the dual roles of motherhood and career can be very challenging**

When broken down to specific challenges that make combining career and motherhood so challenging, a clearer picture emerges and is a further indication of why women may not progress upward in their journalism careers. 54.5% of respondents identify feelings of frustration and burnout as a significant challenge (see *Figure 4*).

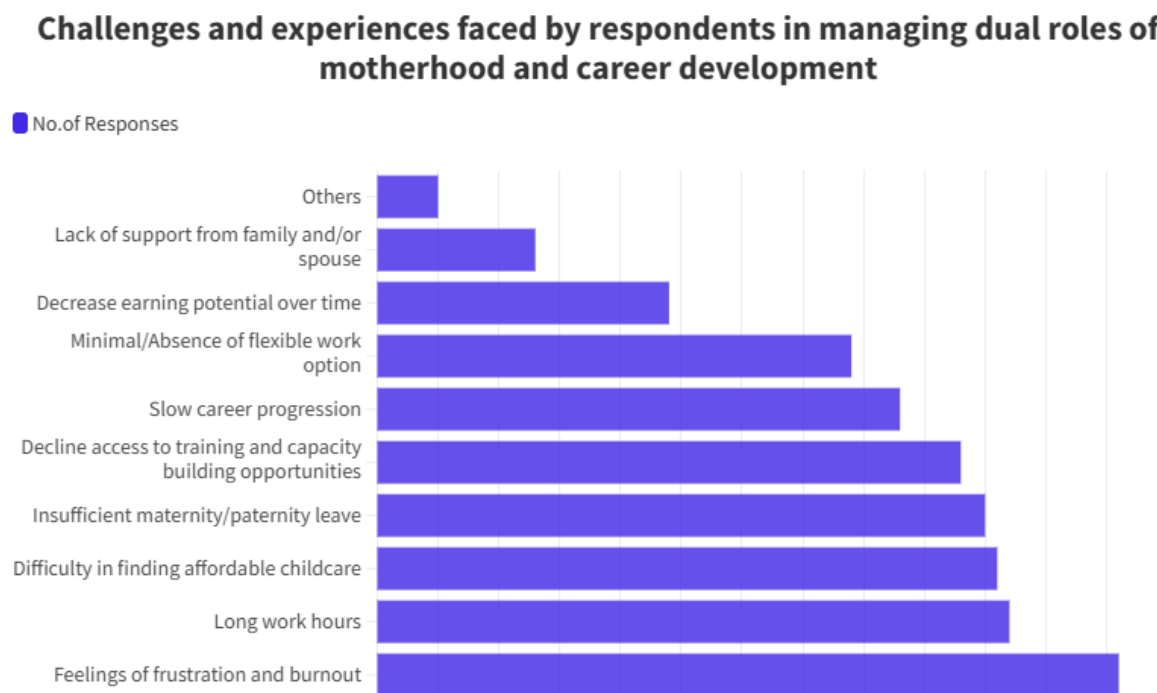
That motherhood is a full-time job is commonly accepted knowledge, which means that for most journalists, they're combining 2 high-powered and highly demanding careers. That 46.6% of respondents identify long work hours and 45.5% identify inability to find affordable childcare services, only agrees with "frustration and burnout" as the most significant challenge identified by respondents (see *Figure 4*). Whereas on the one hand, their journalism careers demand long hours, unlike regular 9 am - 5 pm jobs; their second careers also demand long hours which good childcare support might help with. Unfortunately, this is unaffordable for them because despite the intensity of the journalistic

career, journalists are among the most poorly paid workers, especially in countries like Nigeria (Akinbobola & Charles-Hatt, 2021).

Journalists assigned to beats, male or female, are expected to deliver a particular number of stories from that beat, and if any story breaks from that beat that the journalist misses, for any reason, they will be queried. Combining the job demands with an inability to afford good childcare, is a major challenge, especially for three-quarters of the respondents aged between 25 - 44 years and who have one to three children.

Another group of respondents (44.6%) noted that the maternity/paternity leave given by their organisations is insufficient and there are no flexible work options (34.8%) to enable them to find a balance. A significant number (42.9%) said they no longer have access to and/or are not recommended for training opportunities and 38.4% say having kids slowed their career growth trajectories while 21.4% experience decreased earnings over time (see *Figure 4*).

Figure 4: Challenges and experiences faces by respondents in managing dual roles of motherhood and career development



This ‘motherhood dilemma’ has been identified in previous research around the world (Organ et al., 1979; Lafky, 1991; Sieghart & Henry, 1998; Franks, 2013). As Ross (2001) cited in North (2014) notes, ‘For women considering having children in the future, the near impossibility of successfully combining family and career still seems an insurmountable problem’ (p. 533). Except when they stay long enough in the profession to outgrow the phase where their families no longer depend on them for most of their needs (Tijani, 2019).

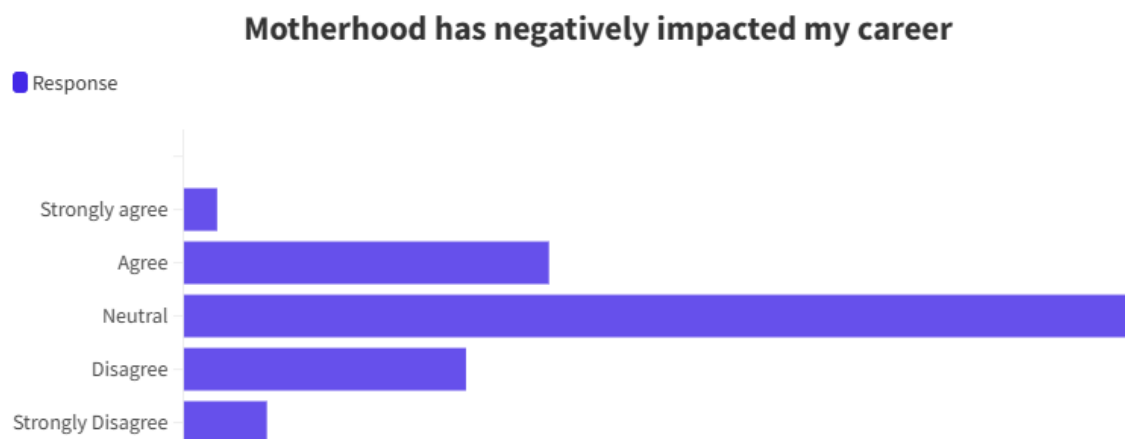
Like previous studies that showed that women with supporting partners and support systems find ways of navigating both roles, only 11.6% of respondents identified an unsupportive partner as a challenge. The majority of the respondents believe that the organisational policies and practices such as insufficient paternity/maternity leave, long work hours, absence of flexible work options, and reduced access to training

opportunities are the obstacles they have to surmount. Unfortunately, Nigeria has not clearly laid down a policy that stipulates working conditions for mothers in the labour force, unlike countries in the global North. In Australia, under the Fair Work Act 2009, parents and others with disability are allowed to request flexible working arrangements including changed work hours or patterns and this can be negotiated with the employers (North, 2014). In Nigeria, this decision rests with the management of the organisation and the negotiating/lobbying skills of the employees.

Impact of Motherhood on Career Advancement

Participants were further asked if motherhood has negatively impacted their career. Interestingly, most participants (50.9%) are neutral or unsure. 21.4% agreed that motherhood has negatively affected their career growth as opposed to 27.7% who disagreed. To them, motherhood has had a positive impact on their profession (see *Figure 5*).

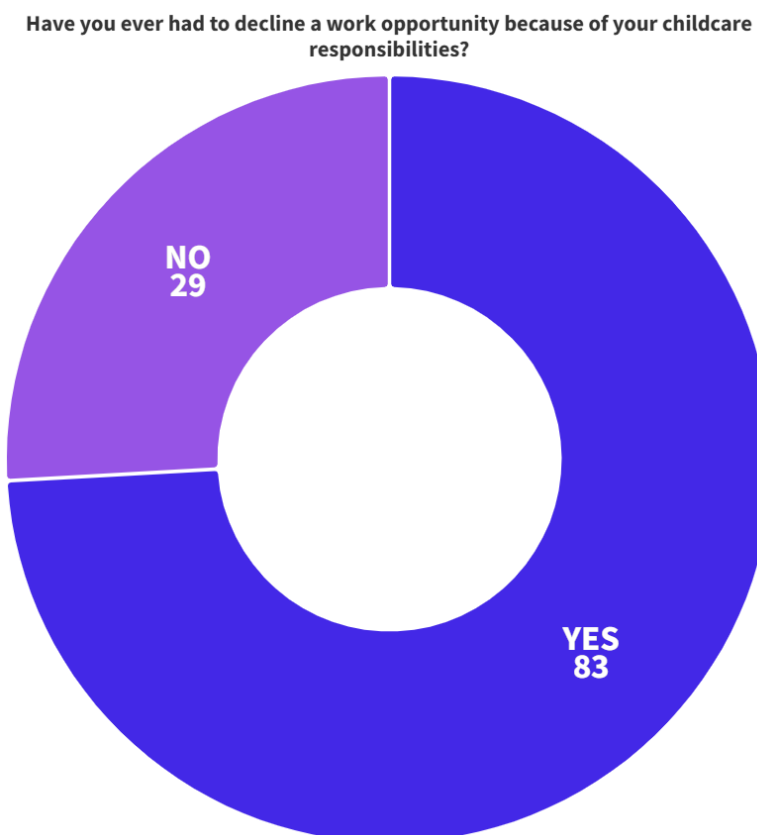
Figure 5: Impact of motherhood in respondent's career growth



Contrary to this position of neutrality, 81 participants (74.1%) said they have had to decline work opportunities at one point or the other due to childcare responsibilities (see *Figure 6*). Although women are said to be multi-taskers, dividing most of their time to get the best and because of this, those in the higher positions see them as being

unable to devote themselves full time to the job, and this counts them out of senior positions. As a result of this, some women outdo themselves at work knowing full well that the so-called flexible rosters are not, in reality, flexible and certainly not sustainable (North, 2014).

Figure 6: Respondents' experience of declining a work opportunity because of childcare responsibilities



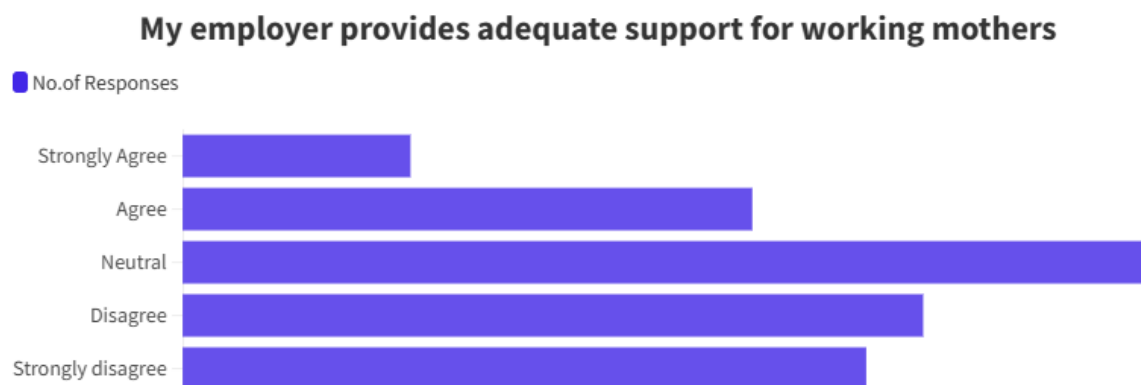
The result from this survey re-echoes Tijani's (2019) submission that the choices for women are like grabbing a double-edged sword, regardless of the part that touches, it hurts, and more than half of the participants appear to agree with this position. This is why many young journalists devote their time and do as much as they can when they are single because they are aware (either consciously or unconsciously) of the challenges of maintaining work-life balance and the fact that they will be unable to achieve much when they are married (Tijani, 2019).

Organisational Policies and Practices that Facilitate or Hinder the Career Progression of

Female Journalists who are Mothers in the Newsroom

Only 25% , indicating 28 respondents say they get adequate support from their employers, whereas 50 respondents say that they have no support from their employers. 34 respondents are neutral on the question of support (see *Figure 7*). Still, the significant number of women who believe that their organisations do not provide adequate support for mothers in the newsroom is an indicator that maternity leave alone does not suffice.

Figure 7: Provision of adequate support for working mothers by employers of respondent's organisations



For respondents with adequate support from the employers, this support comes in various ways, including the provision of a creche/daycare, casual leave to attend to family issues and flexible work arrangements such as not working on weekends as captioned in the responses below:

"I'm allowed to go to the office when important things come up; otherwise I can work from home, and head to events or places of reportage without going into the office and also head back home, and they've also given me the opportunity to work only mornings and afternoons, rarely do I have to do any evening assignments"

"My media organisation has a creche which was built when a woman was the Managing Director of the organisation some 15 years

ago because she knew the challenges female journalists face balancing home with work; we are eternally grateful to her"

"Opportunity to run morning shift for one year after delivery."

"There's an affordable childcare facility at the office premises where mothers keep their children so that mothers can be close to them. They go at intervals to breastfeed their babies."

"I am asked if it's convenient to cover some assignments before I get mandated to do them. This is unlike before when I'm just directed to go for job coverage"

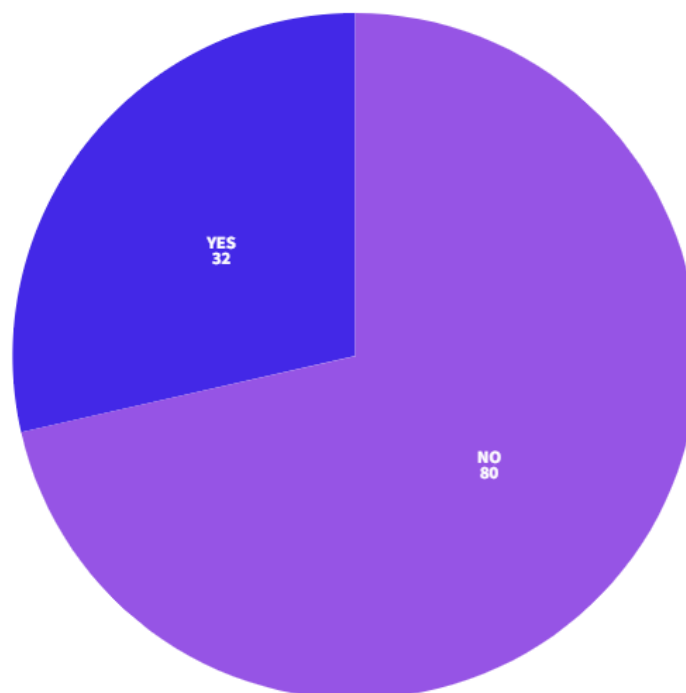
One of the participants said she was transferred to her base so she can be close to her family while delivering on her work.

These concessions, however, cover only the 25% of women who receive support from their organisations. Also a number of these concessions

do not appear to be institutionalised practices which means they can be taken away or left to the benevolence of a manager. Clearly media organisations in Nigeria still have a long way to go to integrate new or modify old policies to accommodate all staffers, especially female journalists and mothers in the newsrooms.

Figure 8: Policies and practices facilitating career progression of working mothers in respondents' organisations

Are you aware of the policies within your organisation that facilitate the career progression of women after they become mothers?

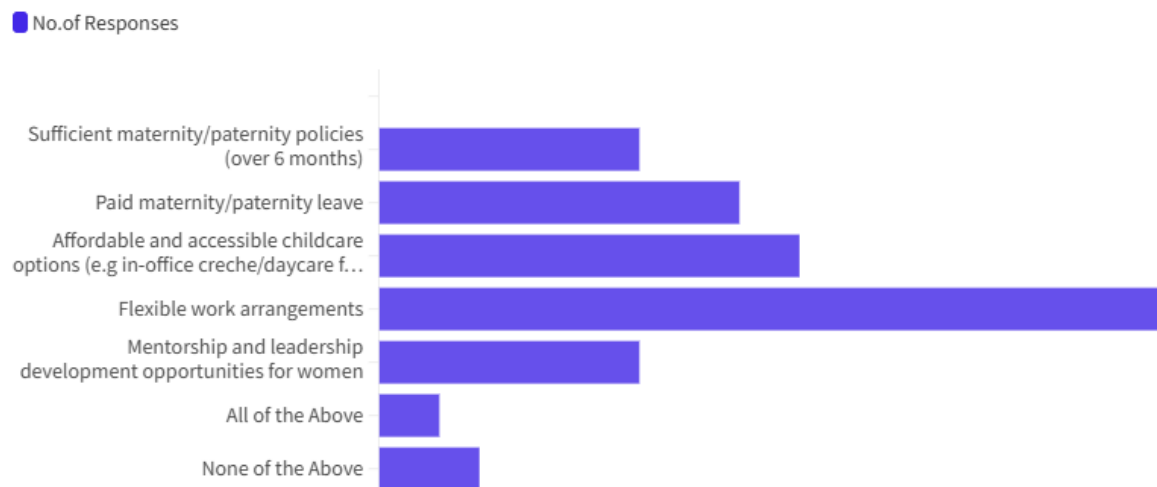


Participants were further asked if they were aware of any policies within their organisation that directly target female journalists with kids to facilitate their career progression and the majority (80) said they are not aware (see *Figure 8*). However, 32 noted that they are aware of these

policies, some of which include flexible work arrangements (34.8), affordable and accessible childcare options (18.8%), paid maternity/paternity leave (16.1%), as well as mentorship and development opportunities. (11.6%) (see *Figure 9*).

Figure 9: Policies and practices facilitating career progression of working mothers

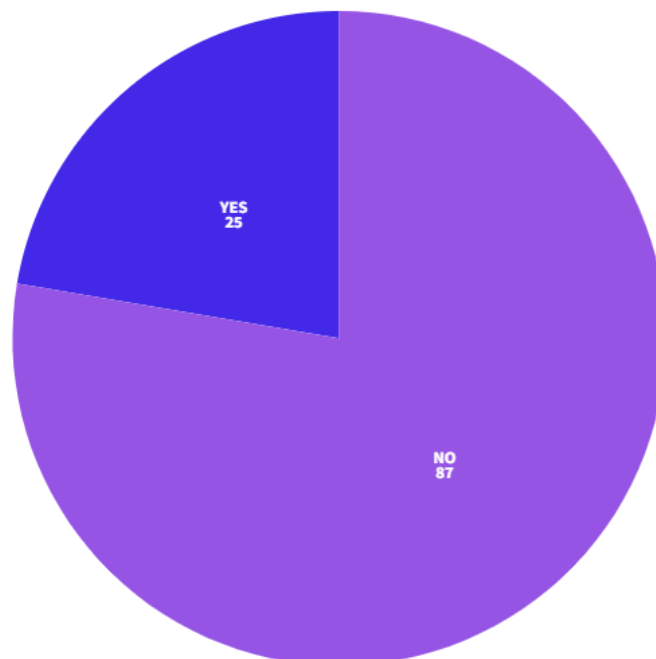
Please select the policies and practices that facilitate the career progression of women after they become mothers.



However, many of the respondents (77.7 percent) are also unaware of organisational policies that hinder their career growth (*Figure 10*).

Figure 10: Awareness of policies that hinder career progression of working mothers in respondents' organisations

Are you aware of the policies within your organisation that hinder the career progression of women after they become mothers?

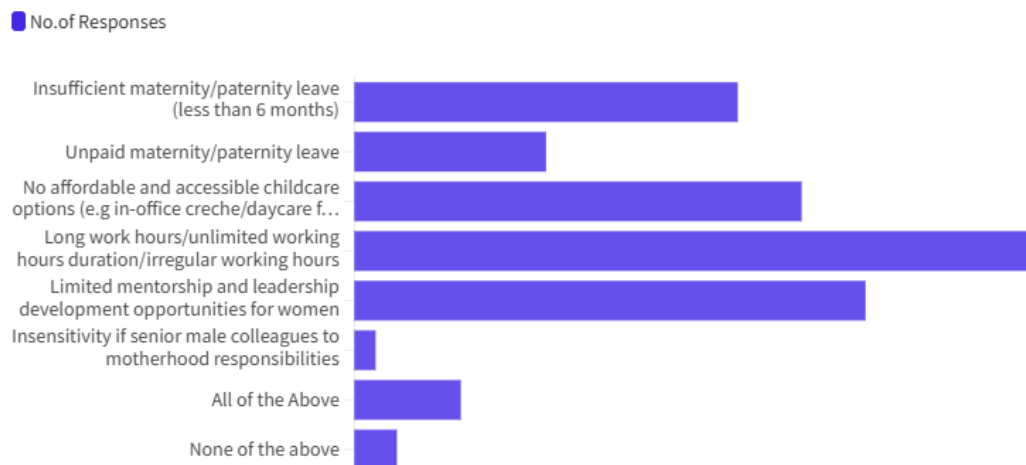


Only 22.3% know the specific practices that hinder their career growth, most of which are unwritten as identified by respondents (see *Figure 11*). They include long work hours (28.6%),

limited mentorship and leadership development opportunities (21.4%), no affordable/accessible childcare services (18.8%), and unpaid maternity/paternity leave (8%) (see *Figure 11*).

Figure 11: Policies and practices hindering career progression of working mothers

Please select the policies and practices that hinder the career progression of women after they become mothers.



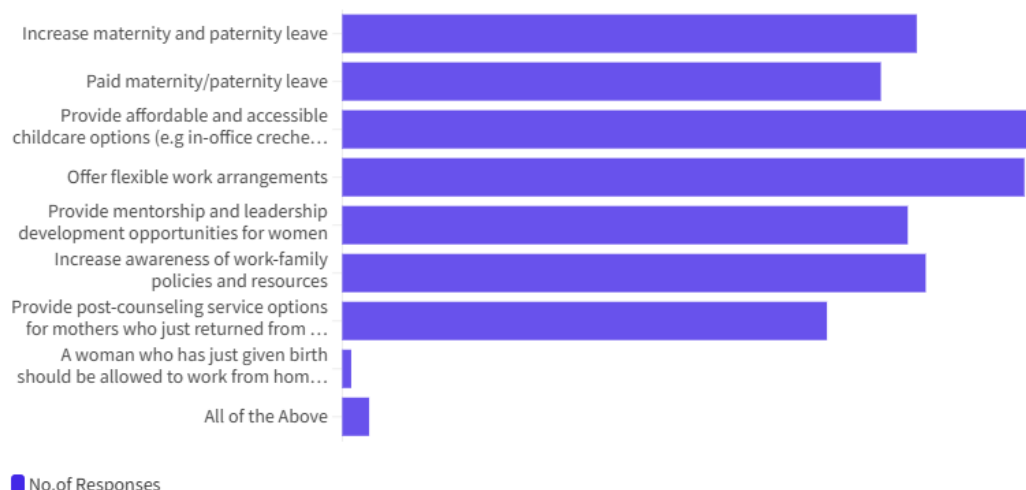
Strategies and Recommendations for News Media Organisations

In this category, participants were asked to recommend strategies and policies for news media

organisations to adopt that support working mothers in the newsroom, and the following responses were received.

Figure 12: Strategies and recommendations for news media organisations to enhance support for working mothers

What strategies and recommendations do you think news media organizations can adopt to enhance support for working mothers in the industry? (Select all that apply)



67.9% of the participants recommended flexible work arrangements for female journalists who are mothers. One of the respondents noted,

“A woman who has just given birth should be allowed to work from home from the fourth to sixth month”.

In addition, 69.6% of respondents suggested that employers should provide affordable and accessible childcare options for them. According to a research conducted by the African Women in Media titled “Barriers to women journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa”, lack of policy consideration for childcare responsibilities and using childcare responsibilities as a reason to limit the progression and opportunities for women journalists were some of the challenges women experienced with their employers (Akinbobola & Charles-Hatt, 2021).

Like the health insurance scheme in most organisations that makes provisions for family members, employers should support female journalists with children by going into agreement with daycare providers for discounted fees for the staff or extra hours after school closes to enable the mothers to have time for work. Or employers can increase the salaries of workers such that their monthly wage is not affected as a result of childcare services. Employers can also create space for creche/daycare with an experienced daycare service provider so that nursing mothers can be able to access their children promptly. Some respondents suggested that employers should increase maternity and paternity leave (57.1%), while others encouraged paid maternity/paternity leave (53.6%). Although there is national and global legislation backing maternity leave entitlements in Nigeria, the legislation still has many loopholes. One such loophole is whether organisations may face penalties if they deny women their maternity leave rights and allowances (Okereke-Adagba, 2022).

Others recommended employers should provide mentorship and leadership development

opportunities for women (56.3%) and post-counselling service options for mothers who just returned from maternity leave (48.2%). This could be peer-to-peer mentorship or professional psychosocial support for women in the media. Some researchers like Barnett (2004) have termed the ‘glass ceiling’ as a ‘maternal wall’ as many mothers tend to advance more slowly than women without children. More than half of the surveyed participants have emphasised the effects of gender-role assignment and lack of transparency in newsroom promotional opportunities (North, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Combining the dual roles of motherhood and journalism comes with a lot of responsibilities and challenges. Some of these challenges include feelings of frustration and burnout, difficulty in finding affordable childcare, minimal/absence of flexible work options, declining access to training and capacity-building opportunities, and decreasing earning potential over time among many others. These challenges significantly impact the career growth of many women in the media industry.

Over 70% of these women say they have had to decline work opportunities at one point due to childcare responsibilities requiring full dedication and commitment, like journalism. Most women are unaware of organisational policies in their newsrooms that facilitate women's career progression after motherhood but seem to have a sense of some unwritten organisational policies that hinder their growth. Some of these policies include unpaid maternity/paternity leave, inaccessible/affordable daycare options, limited mentorship and development opportunities etc. There is a crucial need to incorporate flexible work arrangements in newsrooms. By implementing such arrangements, mothers can more effectively balance their responsibilities at work and home, enabling them to perform at optimum.

Media organisations in Nigeria must adopt gender-conscious approaches and policies specifically designed for female journalists, particularly those who are mothers. To foster an environment where women can thrive in their media careers, organisations must critically review existing policies and structures that disadvantage women. Capacity building for women in media must be deliberate and intentional if gender equality is going to be achieved. It is important to encourage women to apply for competitive positions, opportunities, and salaries rather than take a laid-back approach to career growth.

In addition, civil society organisations focused on media development and innovations must begin to develop gender-conscious campaigns/strategies for promotion, leadership positions, development opportunities, work allocation, etc. These strategies should be test-run in start-up organisations to assess the sustainability of such initiatives. The Nigerian government must also ensure enforceability of the law patterning paid maternity and paternity leave so that media owners defaulting can be penalised.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to every mother out there who feels overburdened and less appreciated, be strong, you are doing an amazing job. Never let anyone tell you otherwise. Without us, the world would freeze. You ROCK.

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