Gender Equality; Lived Experiences of Women in The Media Industry in Tanzania.

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Abstract: **Underrepresentation, inequalities, lack of career advancement, and nonappearance in the decision-making process continue to present obstacles for women in the media industry in Tanzania. This study aimed at exploring and understanding the lived experiences of women in the media industry in Tanzania. This was important given that there is a lack of qualitative research which allows women journalists to recount their situations in their voices and from their perspectives. Methodologically, the study adopted a qualitative approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews which afforded space for a group of four women journalists to tell stories of their lived experiences particularly on decision making, career development, and news production in the media industry. The study discovers that women journalists in Tanzania are affected by the patriarchal system. This continues to influence gender inequalities and limits women's opportunities for participation in effective media development/production. In conclusion, this study indicates that a patriarchal system that is well established in society and maintained through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family lead to gender inequalities in the media industry in Tanzania.**

Keywords: **Media industry, women journalists, patriarchy, gender inequality.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Women in Tanzania, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, are ordinarily treated and rated as a dependent sex or second sex (cf. de Beauvoir, 1974) in need of protection from men (Buberwa, 2016; Osorio et al., 2014). As a result, women are somewhat socialized to accept a lesser status in exchange for protection and privilege from men, forming a relationship that can be likened to benevolent patriarchy (hooks, 2004; Radke-Moss (2014; Swantz, 1985).

In this context, UNICEF (2006) has reported a lack of women's voices to recount their lived experiences in their own words and from their perspectives. What is reported about women, in a patriarchal society like Tanzania, often comes from 'outsiders', whether those be some powerful men, activists, or other privileged commentators a shortcoming which leads to stereotypes and connotations, often categorizing womenfolk as weak and dependent, and even vicious (Quinn & Rosenthal, 2012).

This does not mean that the existing information and perspectives about women in Tanzania are unfair or untrue. They might be entirely true, but to insist only on other people's perspectives or on negative aspects of the narratives about women risks voicing the only part of the story, with the result that our understanding of women's lived experiences

might be curtailed. Partial or isolated stories often lead to stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are blind and incomplete (Adichie, 2016: 87). Stereotypes make one story become the only story, and therefore limit any deep exploration of the "multiple interpretive possibilities" and "discourses existing beneath or alongside the primary narrative" (King, 1998).

This current study, therefore, is sought to provide a platform for women journalists in Tanzania to recount their lived experiences in their voices and from their perspectives, both as unique individuals and as social beings. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the women journalists' lived experiences in Tanzania?
2. How do women foundationalists in Tanzania optimize their life options within the contexts and dynamics embedded in patriarchy, as unique individuals, and as social beings?

These questions aim to generally inform us how women journalists in Tanzania strategize for their livelihoods in the contexts and dynamics embedded in social relations within a patriarchal society, and also, how they comprehend agency in their respective environments, as well as how they envisage and shape their futures.

II. RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Drawing back before and after independence, women in Africa have always played a significant social, economic, and political role (Nancy & Edna, 1976; Geiger, 1987; Robertson, 1988 However, their place in the workplace has continued to spark debate because most women remain in positions where they are unable to make decisions (O'Neil & Domingo, 2015; UN Women, 2017). Reed (2014) explained that women demonstrated considerable leadership in the community and informal organizations, as well as in public and private enterprises. However, socialization and negative stereotyping of women and men reinforce the tendency for decision-making to remain the domain of men.

According to Africa Development Bank (2021), women in Africa are the backbone of the economy in the continent. African women are more economically active as farmers and entrepreneurs than women in any other region of the world. However, they are held back from fulfilling their potential as leaders because they continue to work in jobs with relatively

low earnings, poor working conditions, and limited career prospects (UN Entity for Gender Equality, 2016).

However, gender equality and diversity are recognized to have benefits for organizations, institutions, and the overall economy (Profeta, 2017). Underrepresentation, absence of equal opportunities, and career advancement to senior leadership positions remain the major problems and continue to be obstacles for African women in the workplace. Regardless of the level of education and wish to advance in their careers, women do not reach the same managerial positions as their men counterparts (Yellen, 2020).

In Tanzania, the lack of women in the decision-making process has attracted many researchers (Meena, Rusimbi & Israel, 2017; Nyoni & Chen He, 2019; Strachan, 2015; Shigela, 2018). According to National Bureau of Statistics (2017), women in Tanzania create more than half of the population. However, their participation and representation in significant leadership positions, governance, and policymaking organs remain lower than men. This situation also manifests itself in the Tanzania media industry where women are subordinate to men, oppressed and discriminated against by masculine newsroom culture, and underrepresented in leadership positions/decision-making positions and in the production of news (Gender Link, 2009; GMMP, 2015).

Recent studies in Tanzania have shown that although women journalists enter professional schools in numbers nearly equal to men, they are still substantially less likely to reach the highest levels in the profession of journalism (Ahmadi,2018; Alloo,2020; Gender Link, 2009; GMMP, 2015). In Tanzania media industry, a small number of women occupy senior decision-making positions and in the production of news such as reporters, presenters, or writers for several years (Duwe & White, 2011; GMMP, 2015; MCT, 2019). In this context, Solomon (2006) concludes that media in Tanzania is a male-dominated industry as any activities women carry within the media are based on male-dominated authority.

Kilimwiko (2009) has revealed that the number of female journalists working in Tanzanian newspapers, radio, and television has increased from 19 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2003. Despite the growing number of female journalists in Tanzania, the majority of them face challenges to rise and hold decision-making positions. A similar view was also observed in the 1999 survey of 250 women working in the Tanzania media, where a total of 43 workers in the editorial section, only one was a woman (Tenganamba, 1999). Inequalities more commonly experienced by women in media range from low rates of employment, less payment for similar jobs, underrepresentation in decision-making positions, and discrimination against women in the allocation of news reporting assignments as diverse impact on women progress in the media (Duwe & White, 2011; Gender Link, 2009).

Several studies have shown that equality in editorial positions is impossible without women's empowerment and gender equality in media (Byerly, 2011; GMMP, 2015; MEAA

Women in Media Report, 2016). It is suggested that until the highly male-dominated newsroom culture changes, there will not be signs of progress of women journalists working in the media (De Bruin, 2014).

Lack of equal opportunity to progress and stereotypes in the management continue to keep female journalists out of decision-making positions (Media Council of Tanzania, 2019). GMMP (2015) indicates that even though there have been significant gains in the inclusion of women in the media industry, much work remains, particularly in a decision-making position and in production where the number of men is still higher than women in these positions (MCT, 2019).

Although men and women are considered equal under the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (1977), women in Tanzania media face resistance despite their outstanding abilities and influence in instigating social change through media. According to the Gender and Media Progress Study Southern Africa (2012), only 22 percent of women in the media had managed to enter on board of directors and 21 percent of women in top management. But, the whole system of operation in the media is male-dominated by 64 percent of the total labor force compared to 36 percent of women employees in the media.

A similar observation was given in the study conducted by the MCT (2019) where gender inequality remains a significant characteristic of women in the media. Women's careers in both print and electronic media remain concentrated in specific jobs. There is only one Director-General in more than 50 electronic media whereas the majority of women journalists stuck up in middle-level positions with little possibilities to advance up topmost positions (MCT, 2018). The majority of women journalists are confined to covering "soft news" (MCT, 2019, pp. 2-3).

It is believed that the future of women in the media depends on the participation of women in decision-making positions. The unfavorable cultural attitude toward women journalists in media remains prevalent in Tanzania. This translates into limitations and social hindrances for women journalists in the Tanzania media industry (Duwe & White, 2011; Gender Link, 2009).

Myumbo (2018) also asserts that throughout history, women hunting to pursue their careers in male-dominated society always face unfriendliness, ridicule, and other forms of social approval often rooted in patriarchy. Such obstacles awaken the government of Tanzania in eradicating gender inequality. The commitment of the Tanzanian government is registered in national strategies, plans, and policies such as the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 and the constitution of Tanzania of 1977. Tanzania has also ratified regional and international commitments on gender equality and women empowerment such as the 2030 SDG Agenda and the long-term 2063 Agenda.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs the data of women journalists from three targeted media houses in Tanzania. These are Tanzania Standard News Papers Limited, Mwananchi Communication Limited, and Sahara Media Group Limited which is one of the leading media companies in Tanzania located in Mwanza. These media houses were selected for some reasons. First, these media houses hold the population of women journalists who have served in the Tanzania media industry for a long time.

Second, these media houses represent women from both electronic media and print media which comprise television stations, newspapers and radio stations. Third, these media houses have a reputation for good journalism practice and are among the major media houses in the country which has earned a reputation both locally and internationally for being a professional and objective medium in terms of news gathering and analyses.

The researcher used a qualitative research method whereby in-depth interviews were used to collect data from participants. With qualitative research, it was expected that this approach would enable to get more insights, detailed, and in-depth information from the respondents. The target population for the study was women media practitioners from the aforementioned media houses. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants Thus, a total of four participants were interviewed in this study. The researcher chose four participants as representatives of the rest in the media since they are the actual media practitioners who can print a big picture of women in the Tanzania media industry. In analyzing data, the researcher used a narrative approach. In that sense, the participants through narration, provided lived media experiences. The researcher interpreted the construction of these narratives.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research objective

To ascertain the position of women in the decision-making process in the media industry in Tanzania.

The study focused on women journalists because it is argued that women working in male-dominated professions and environments face challenges that are unique to their counterparts since the focus on women in the media industry remains especially important in the light of studies that point to the negative personal and social consequences women face.

In addition, there are no substantive qualitative studies in Tanzania that explore and understand the lived experiences of women journalists in the Tanzania media industry by capturing stories narrated by women from their mouthpieces. Most of the existing information about women in the Tanzania media industry often comes from the perspectives and voices of 'outsiders', whether those be managers in top positions, policymakers, or other privileged commentators. As a result,

we rarely hear the voices of women journalists recounting their situations from their voices and perspectives.

This does not mean that the existing information about women journalists in the Tanzania media industry is unfair or untrue. They might be entirely true. However, to insist only on other people's perspectives or on negative aspects of the narratives about these women risks voicing the only part of the story, with the result that our understanding of their lived experiences in the media might be biased. This shortcoming leads to stereotypes that perpetuate skewed perceptions and connotations, categorizing such women journalists as less important in the field.

Data that fell into this category arose when the participants recounted their experiences in decision-making positions. In this objective, it was important to understand: If women and men have equal opportunities in decision-making: Do they get promotions easily? Are they accorded the same level of respect as men? Do women experience any barriers in the media because of gender? Do these barriers prevent women from getting decision-making positions?

Findings from this objective revealed that gender inequalities due to hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy which is well established in media tend to oppress and subjugate in decision-making positions, a condition that leads to underrepresentation, lack of equal opportunity for career advancement, and stereotypes about women in media continue to keep women out of decision-making positions. Therefore, in the media industry, where systems and structures are patriarchal in nature, they tend to be barriers to the participation of women journalists in decision making.

In that sense, women's experience towards career progression is always marred by difficulties. Masculine characteristics have typically connected to the success of men in decision-making positions compared to women, a situation that leads women to continue to be in a vulnerable position where sexual harassment, discrimination, and family responsibilities seem to be a barrier to women in leadership positions.

V. DISCUSSIONS

These findings concur with prior studies which indicate that in a patriarchal setting decision making and economic control is vested in the hands of men (Chambers et al., 2004; Chowdhury, 2009; Carter et al., 2019; Thompson, 2013). Despite efforts and provisions for women's rights, equal opportunities, and career advancement, a patriarchal culture that is well established in our society continues to affect the lives of women in the workplace (North, 2009; Sultana, 2010). According to Obbo (2005), women in the decision-making process have always been exposed to varying forms of discrimination due to the simple fact of their femaleness.

The concept of patriarchy is defined by different thinkers in different ways but in the journalism field media feminists all over the world carry this as an obstacle to the achievements of the objectives of women's equality and development in the media (Byerly, 2011; Chambers et al., 2004; Macharia, 2015).

All these studies revealed that discrimination against women in decision-making positions in the media is a result of the patriarchal culture that extracts the difference between the role, position, and significance of men and women, both in the private and public sphere. According to Yusuf (2004), gender differences that exist in the media are encouraged and legitimized through religion, education, culture, and even the ideology of the state.

The findings in this study concur with Mtambalike's (2021) statement on harassment and discrimination at work against women. She revealed that violence against women in the workplace, including in the newsrooms, is just a continuation of the socially constructed systems that glorify and give more dignity to a man than to a woman. According to Mtambalike in Tanzania newsrooms, leadership opportunities are more accessible to men than women by the assumption that they are not good leaders because they have emotional feelings, they have family responsibilities that interfere with their performance at workplaces. Although it is an indisputable fact that women have many responsibilities in their families and offices, commitment to creating an environment that will support their performance and create an enabling environment for women to access leadership opportunities is destructed by patriarchal culture in the media (Mtambalike, 2021).

According to Soemandoyo (1999), the patriarchal structure in the media is maintained in the organizational structure in which the arrangement of women and men journalists is unbalanced. Nadya et al. (2016) observed that the underrepresentation of women in decision making is attributed to the exclusion, lack of equal opportunities, and cultural barriers in the media which preserve men in significant positions and cluster of authority in decision making than women. In that sense, the hostile cultural attitude toward women in decision-making remains prevalent in Tanzania, which translates into limitations and social hindrances for women in decision-making positions. Therefore, these findings are well consistent with the theory of patriarchy which presume that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power (Lerner, 1989).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of this study was to understand the lived experiences of women in Tanzania media. This was important because there is no appropriate study that explores the lived experience of women in the media from their mouthpiece talking about themselves and their lived experiences from their perspectives. In that sense, the researcher aims to understand the mechanisms or driving forces that have continued to hinder the equal participation of women and men in the media industry from women themselves. The general belief in Tanzania is that, gender equality can be attained through laws and gender policies. However, this research found that some social norms and traditions are not just confining women at home, but specifically excluding the

workplaces as an option for women. This needs to be understood and interpreted through a patriarchal lens.

The main argument of this study has been that to fully understand the lived experiences of women working in the Tanzania media industry, it is necessary to understand that women can be effective as men in the media. Although various barriers in media prevent women from getting equal opportunities as men in the media industry, in this study, the most dominant obstacle to having an influence and preventing women from getting equal opportunities in the media is a patriarchal system that is well established in our society and maintained through various institutions. Discrimination against women at work places, including women in the media is sustained by maintaining masculinity values that favor men over men.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

From the above discussion, it is clear that women are victims of discrimination. However, the government has taken measures to address gender concerns in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, macro and micro policies, strategies, and programs (National Strategy for Gender development, 2000), but there is still much to be done about continuing persistent gender disparities in the media. It is therefore recommended that to understand and solve the struggle of women in the Tanzania's media industry, it is necessary to place women's struggles in the context of the rules of patriarchy because Tanzania is a patriarchal society, a system where social stratification and gender differentiation enable men to dominate women in all spheres of life (Connell, 1995; Myumbo, 2018). This situation often leads to the stereotypes of male breadwinners and female homemakers. As a result of patriarchal attitudes, the role of women is therefore typically viewed in the kitchen (Makama, 2013). Since the patriarchal construct is real and is embedded in cultures, it may therefore be argued that the work-life imbalance experienced by women in the media is a result of the conflict between their societal expectations of traditional roles in their families and their career.

Intervention to solve the struggle of women in the Tanzania media industry should be placed in the context of the rules of patriarchy to inform the public of the need to ease extreme patriarchal norms and values through a radical transformation of our societies because it is a long-standing system that we are born into and participate in, mostly automatically.

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