

Effects of Domestic Responsibilities on Career Growth among Women Journalists in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate effects of domestic responsibilities career growth of women journalists in Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to examine extent in which domestic duties affect women journalists' thoughts on their career progression and explore how women journalists cope with inequalities in the media organizations in Kenya. The study used feminist theories to explain the study under study. Online questionnaire was administered to 358 journalists whose details were extracted from Media Council of Kenya Accreditation database. Descriptive research design was adopted by this study. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to analyze data from questionnaire and in-depth interview on women journalists. The study found that the working environment for women journalists presents unique issues attributed to domestic duties. The study found that 79% of the study participants strongly believed that newsrooms working environment favors male journalists as they can easily report to work after childbirth, balance family and work while climbing the corporate ladder. In conclusion, women journalists are likely to perform dismally due to domestic responsibilities. There is need for future studies to undertake a qualitative study to examine individual women journalists with young children to see how they are coping with them situation and how this affects their career progression. Women journalists requires space to progress in their career and to operate in an environment that is free from obstacles that hinders them from moving upwards in their organizations. This study is important because it investigates the domestic factors and their effects on women journalists' progression in Kenyan media industry.

Keywords: Domestic Responsibilities, Gender, Journalists, Media, Women

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are under great social control and scrutiny, which has restricted what they can say, where, and to whom. Cultural moves in almost every social set-up determine women's socialization in no uncertain terms (Seron et al., 2016). This has an important bearing on their ability to communicate and express their thoughts. To discuss women's position in society, it is necessary to deal with the present situation of women in a specific context. There is abundant evidence of the underrepresentation of women as subjects of coverage, but until now there was no reliable, comprehensive data on which to make a clear determination about where women currently fit into the news-making operation or in the decision-making or ownership structure of their companies (Shor et al., 2015; Salido-Fernández et al., 2021). Elsewhere, it can be argued that if news content is the final outcome of a series of steps that involve the participation of many individuals, then what is the role of women in determining and shaping the news agenda? Who decides how many stories are by women and feature women as important subjects in news stories?

The launch of the First United Nations Decade for Women in 1975 has not only highlighted the underrepresentation of women in news but also in decision-making positions (De Bruin, 2014). Since then, numerous studies have emerged on how media organizations treat women, and as Melki and Mallat (2016) observe, women journalists operate in a paradoxical environment and continue to struggle due to pay parity and other discrimination. Journalism studies in Europe reveal the existence of gender asymmetries (Crespo et al., 2009). Since the 1960s, many things have changed since the first women were employed in newsrooms. For example, as reported by the Committee on the Professional Card of Journalists in its 2021 report, women in newsrooms grew from 2% in 2000 to 41% in 2020 (Sharp & Vodanovic, 2022). This growth among female journalists has also been observed in recent appointments, where among the 33 new top editors appointed across media organizations in 12 countries, including Kenya, in 2023 and 2024, 24% are women (Reuters Institute, 2024).

According to Steiner (2012), any glass ceiling and other invisible barriers are implicit and have the ability to repeatedly prevent women journalists from growing upward. The tendency to prevent women from attaining the highest decision-making is not exclusive to the Kenyan media industry. A recent report indicates women remain absent from leadership positions in most countries, representing 27% of managerial positions in 156 countries (World Economic Forum, 2021). Previous studies on work-centered obstacles among women journalists' career growth have identified glass ceiling effects, sexual harassment, and income inequalities (Cunha & Martins, 2023). Nonetheless, in the recent past, research has emerged on the effects of domestic factors that hinder the career growth of women journalists, but this research is still scarce in some countries, including Kenya. As such, this study seeks to contribute to a body of literature, mainly the current study of women journalists in the Kenyan media space.

The media industry in Kenya is vibrant and comprises TV, radio, and newspapers, and broadcasting channels are categorized as free-to-air TV stations and FM radio stations. There are over 60 TV channels and 200 radio stations, meaning women journalists are equally benefiting in terms of work opportunities. As the industry grows, so does the number of journalism graduates. This study is interested in women journalists who, despite the challenges they encounter, studies confirm that more girls are attracted to journalism because female TV presenters are the most identified journalists (Grenby et al., 2009). This contributes to the increasing perception that journalism is the most suitable career path for women. According to Okono (2013), in Kenya, for every five journalism or media graduates, four are women, and this demonstrates that there is no shortage of women journalists. In Britain, Franks (2013) found in a study that female students outnumbered male students, and in fact, the number of female students who had graduated as undergraduates in journalism grew to 44% between 2001 and 2016 (Thurman & Kunert, 2016).

Nyabola (2016) argues that Kenya's media environment is primarily conservative in terms of cultural and religious views, and hence women's voices are always overlooked (Steeves & Awino, 2015). Moreover, women journalists in Kenya face diverse challenges, including verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. Further studies in South Africa show that more women are joining the media, but men benefit more from job promotions and remunerations (Jost & Möser, 2023). While explanations of gender disparities in newsrooms extend beyond childcare, nevertheless, domestic responsibilities in general remain an issue that requires attention from practitioners and scholars. Feminist scholars investigating the effects of parenting on the media sector highlight the incompatibilities that exist between working behavior and domestic responsibilities (Wreyford, 2018).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Journalism has historically been male-dominated, with women facing barriers to entry and advancement (Ncube, 2021). However, over the years, women have made significant progress in the field, breaking through the glass ceiling and making a name for themselves as influential journalists and media personalities (Konow-Lund & Hoiby, 2023). Despite these advancements, women in journalism continue to face challenges such as gender bias, unequal pay, and limited opportunities for career advancement. Women are also more likely to experience online harassment and abuse, which can harm their mental health and professional reputation. In recent years, there has been a growing movement to address these issues and promote gender equality in journalism.

1.2 Specific Objectives

This study sought to examine effects of domestic responsibilities on career growth among women journalists in Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- (i) To what extent do domestic responsibilities affect women journalists' thoughts on their career progression?
- (ii) How does women journalists cope with inequalities in the media organizations in Kenya?

1.3 Research Questions

- (i) To what extent do domestic responsibilities affect women journalists' thoughts on their career progression?
- (ii) How does women journalists cope with inequalities in the media organizations in Kenya?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Feminist Theory

This study builds on feminist theory advanced by Mary Wollstonescraft (1759-1797) who was the first feminist scholar in the liberal traditions (Zerbe-Enns et al., 2021). The traditional and modern feminists have argued that those working in the media industry are very important in the society. According to this theory, women have challenged male dominated fields and while studies continue to examine women's role in the society and how social order disadvantaged women (Wood, 2001; Hemmings, 2005). Social feminist specializing on the link between private

and public context of women's lives argue that gender equity can be realized when cultural and economic sources of women's oppression are abolished in the society. Further reports reveal that women in developing countries such as Kenya have very few job opportunities (Stokes, et al., 2015). According to the theory, women undergoes newsrooms processes like men and they both work to climb the ladder in the organization.

Furthermore, research has shown that the labour force among women been hindered by wars and conflicts among other factors. In fact, when viewed from media lenses, women can hardly make to most newspaper front page and if they are covered, mainly dominate lifestyle sections of the newspapers (Coche et al., 2024). Another study investigating women in British newspapers found 78% of newspaper bylines in Britain were written by men compared to 22% which are written by women journalists (Harri et al., 2020). The study also revealed that more men are likely to be featured or quoted as news sources. Additionally, men dominate global labour market accounting for 73% compared to women employment to population of nearly 48% while in Sub Saharan Africa, ratio of men to women is 70% to 59% (Anyanwu, & Augustine, 2013). In other studies, focusing on East Africa, it found that few women in the region were holding leadership positions and despite 96% of the journalists have covered gender issues, gender awareness and sensitivity is still far from being realized in the newsrooms. This theory helps explains the struggles by women journalists to ensure their status and recognition is felt in the newsrooms and not oppressed. Women's issues are unique in the newsrooms and hence worth considered for them to benefit like their counterpart men journalists.

2.2 Empirical Review

While recognizing the significance of representations of women, several studies have analyzed these representations and their impact on perceptions of female entrepreneurship (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2007; Ahl & Marlow, 2012). These studies have shown that the media (including newspapers, TV and radios) portray women as less purposeful, professional and successful than its male counterpart. Despite recognizing the importance of media representations of women one notable gap exist in literature. For instance, gender inequalities in any economic activity are associated with gendered aspects of work, for example, the kind of work men and women undertake, the locations and sectors they typically work in or the allocation of paid and unpaid work within households (Rouse, & Visweswaran, 2011).

The women journalists (field reporters, correspondents or even news anchors) are subjected to physical scrutiny; their appearance including what they wear, or hairstyle get scrutinized by not only outsiders but also colleagues and workplace including management (Chambers et al., 2004). In a report, Human Rights Watch observed that journalists especially women encounter complex challenges such as threats and withholding of licensing which undermines freedom of the press. These officials also attack journalists while carrying out their duties. In fact, Kenyan bloggers in May 2018 received threats from Kenya Film Classification Board which required them to seek approvals before posting their content online. This followed earlier threats by the government to undertake legal or information actions including harassment, intimidation, and mobile phone surveillance.

Further literature show women journalists don't enjoy some privileges as men, and they have listed several interrelated factors that contribute to this problem (Organista, & Mazur, 2020). In this case, women encounter strong tension due family and work relate duties and this is attributed to traditional gender roles related to conceptions and issues such as division of labour in family level. According to Weaver and Willnat (2016) women journalists in USA were less likely to be married and have children than men (Elsewhere, Rivera (2007) report that women journalists planning to have children at times, encounter discrimination in the workplace. Moreover, Kim (2006) in a study conducted in Korea, found that women journalist's career progression is likely to be affected by work family tension and also childcare duties that are unlikely to be handled by men.

In Malaysia, Central America, and Venezuela literature suggests that women journalists often don't continue to work in the media industry after having children because there is no culture supporting combination of children and work (Ashaf, & Kartika, 2019). Similarly, in Nepal, women still hold the responsibility for domestic duties such as childcare and household chores (Koirala, 2020). Consequently, priority is given to male journalists who can offer more time. Moreover, most women in Nepal do not drive, which means they do not have as easy access to news sources as their male colleagues, worsening their position even more. Therefore, these studies have shown that women's worldwide face almost similar challenges, but little is known about link between domestic responsibilities and female journalists' career progression in Kenyan media environment. In addition, studies conducted in Kenya show women and girls hold unlimited potential and barriers that constrain them are multifaceted (Mwobobia, 2012). It can also be noted that gender-based violence continue to be pervasive and women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes at all levels.

Further studies have examined the challenges and opportunities for inclusion in the news media among Women (Dunn & Thomas, 2016). Using quantitative content analysis, they found that there is continued under representation of women in the news coverage but on a differentiated basis by topic. What is clear from such studies is that there are opportunities for women at all levels to make into media headlines or generally for the media to feature women stories. Without a doubt, everywhere the media has the ability to majorly contribute to the advancement of women journalists. They tend to create self-regulatory strategies that helps to eliminate misleading and improper gender-based issues.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used descriptive research design, and this allowed the researcher to examine current issues or problems by collecting data used to describe the situation more completely. The study collected quantifiable information used for statistical analysis of the sample. In addition, the study also collected qualitative data through in-depth interview to explore how women journalists cope with inequalities in the media organizations in Kenya. This targeted mainly women with children or those who have had experience at newsrooms. In this study, target population was accredited journalists who details are found in Media Council of Kenya online database using online questionnaire generated through Google forms. As of May 3, 2024, there were a total of 3,400 journalists in the MCK's database and this constituted the target population for this study (MCK, 2024). Since target respondents were dispersed, the online questionnaire allowed the study collect larger amounts of data efficiently with minimal error due to the lack transferring written data on to a computer), economically.

3.2 Sampling Design

This study employed purposive sampling technique, a method that seeks to achieve a homogeneous sample, that is, sample whose units share similar characteristics or traits; it can be group of people similar in terms of age, gender, background, or occupation among others (Weisberg, 2009). In this study, journalists working in the traditional media (TV and radio) were considered for inclusion. The study utilized Media Council of Kenya accreditation database to find list of accredited journalists and their media organizations.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \quad n = \frac{3,400}{1+3,400(0.05)^2} \quad n=357.89 (358)$$

The data collection was based on a self-report method in which the respondents filled the structured questionnaire using any gadget that accesses the internet. The researcher intended to elicit data about the respondents' views on various aspects pertaining to their past computer-based learning experiences. An online survey link was shared to 358 women journalists through their emails or via Group WhatsApp platforms of the women journalists. All the potential survey participants were invited to take part in the survey.

3.3 Data Analysis

This study analyzed one data set: Quantitative data. The quantitative data is based on 358 online questionnaires shared with the respondents. Quantitative data from the survey were entered and exported to SPSS for analysis. The data from questionnaires were in numerical form. In addition, qualitative data from in-depth interview were analyzed based on themes in which notes from field were summarized thematically.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

Majority 52% of the respondents were female compared with 48% men. This means views used in this study represented both gender. Although some study participants had reached over 50 years old, a significant were youthful and their ages could fit this role of reporting children issues including their rights (See Table 1). Among the study participants included high school (9%) graduates and this could be individuals beginning their journalism careers. The study did not delve into this but interestingly notes that considering some high school have journalism clubs or emergence of small media houses without adequate resources to acquire trained journalists, there is likelihood that fresh high graduates found their way into newsrooms and their roles might on the learning.

Moreover, as shown in Table 1, majority of the study participants worked in radio (38%) and television (32%) and these platforms are mainly characterized by high market share and popularity in Kenya. Generally, views were

utilized in this study depicts representation of diverse media platforms on relationship between domestic issues and women journalists' career progression. Regarding the years in which study participants had been practicing journalism, a significant number had worked in this field for over six years. This means they have knowledge of women journalist's experiences especially from domestic responsibilities' context.

Table 1*Demographic Information of Study Participants*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	128	48
	Female	137	52
Age bracket	18-29 yrs	66	25
	30-39 yr	103	39
	40-49 yrs	70	26
	55+ yrs	26	10
Highest level of education	University	137	52
	Tertiary college	103	39
	High school	25	9
Media type	TV	86	32
	Print (newspaper/magazine	33	12
	Radio	101	38
	Online	35	13
	Other	10	4
No. of years	0-5 yrs	76	29
	6-10 yrs	99	37
	11-15 yrs	65	25
	16+ yrs	25	9

4.2 Presentations of Findings

This study examined effects of domestic duties on women journalist's career progression in Kenya's media industry often seen as diverse and well financed. Based on feminist theory, this pays close attention of diverse ways in which career narrative of the study participants included their experiences related to oppressive factors such as domestic duties. This was evident from the survey findings which showed that male journalists were likely to cover more stories compared to their counterpart male journalists (See Table 2). This can be attributed to absence of women journalist due to their inability to balance their journalistic work and household leading pressure to deliver. For example, slightly over 60% of the study participants said that they believe that in the last twelve months, many women journalists had missed work because of childcare or pressure to meet deadlines making them shy away from their supervisors or managers. This could mean those with young children and does not access services of house managers/nannies individually perform the duties themselves leading to underperformance. Consequently, they may be put notice which might lead to stressful situations.

As shown in Table 2, a significant 79% of the study participants strongly believed that women journalists in most media organizations in Kenya have always struggled in getting decision making positions or don't get promoted nor enjoy pay raise as male counterparts. Most certainly this can be attributed to lack of office guidelines to address such inequalities. Furthermore, the study findings show that majority 51% of the study participants said that they believed that women journalists are working in some media organizations that does not have policies to address issues of women. On the other hand, 37% seems to be working in originations with well-structured systems and women journalists are benefiting and are able to progressively climb the ladder as their individual issues are addressed at organizational level. This suggests that such media organizations always consider individual skills, competence, an open mindset, and experience rather than allowing individual employee (both male and female) to use every available method to progress. By developing effective human resource practices, it means the media organization are likely to work with and regard employee recommendation systems most effective leading to high women journalist's satisfaction.

The study participants were asked to share their experiences on work balance and other roles. The majority 79% said they believed that it always easier for male journalists to work after childbirth, balance family and work while climbing the corporate ladder. Nonetheless, 21% point to some cases where men are unable return to work, and

this means some men have household entities hindering them from performing their duties well in the newsrooms. The consequences of uncondusive /unequal working environment for women for women journalists as provided in Table 2. About 61% of the study participants said that they believe there are women journalists who have been thinking of resigning or asking for lighter duties to allow them manage work and family related pressure causing them stress. This demonstrates how domestic factors exerts more pressure and the study argues that women journalists deserve an environment that allows them to compete with men but those which extra family responsibilities can exempted.

These findings agree with previous studies which found that there appear many challenges within journalism profession that limits women journalists from continuing with their professional practice (Gill & Toms, 2019). In other studies, Koirala (2020) found that women journalists' domestic duties such as childcare hinder them from competing with men who seem to benefit while Rivera (2007) found that women journalists who wanted to have children sometimes faced discrimination within newsrooms because they could not continue practicing for longer. As shown in the latest report of the Global Media Monitoring Project (2020) which diagnoses the situation on gender equality in the media, 40% of the news in print and online newspapers, mainstream television and radio are signed by women. This study found that there were women journalists who had resigned or stopped from the practice of journalism due in order to attend their household duties.

Table 2

Domestic Responsibilities and Women's Career Progression

	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	STD
Men are likely to cover more stories compared to female journalists undertaking childcare.	11%	17%	5%	36%	31%	3.982	1.941
More female journalists missing work due to household chores such as cleaning, laundry, and maintenance.	20%	10%	9%	21%	40%	2.861	2.293
Women journalists always struggle to get to decision making, get promotions and pay raise compared to men?	10%	9%	2%	51%	28%	3.394	3.185
Most female journalists work at media houses that have no policies on maternity leave, paternity leave, and childcare assistance.	23%	14%	11%	19%	33%	3.752	2.671
It is always easier for men to return to work after childbirth, balance family and work, and balance family and work while climbing the corporate ladder.	12%	9%	0%	29%	50%	3.259	2.433
Women journalists have always thought of leaving or asking for reduced work due to family duties?	11%	17%	5%	36%	31%	3.358	2.654

The study also sought to examine how women journalists cope with inequalities in the media organizations in Kenya. In this case, few women journalists with children while undertaking their newsroom roles were interviewed. These findings show that most women suffer in silence as they don't have many options of dealing with inequalities that exists especially those emanating from their domestic responsibilities such as attending to their children or handling household duties together with newsrooms roles.

I have always tried to multitask that is waking very early in the morning to organize my children for school, but I find myself reporting to work late or not finishing my work in gathering for news. So, every time I miss this, my boss tries to punish me by making sure my stories aren't published which is so demoralizing. It has been hard to cope with these issues (Key Informant, May 7, 2024).

Another adds that, women journalists at times break out while being pressured to deliver their work by their supervisors. One women journalist shared her experiences when her supervisor requested for sexual exchange to allow her delay in sending news reports: "One day I did my household activities and quickly ran to cover protests in town, but I could capture more details of the protest. I had to get it from colleagues, but my boss was pressuring me to send it immediately. When I requested more time, he started asking me to meet him in his office which I did, but he ended asking for sexual favours."

Overall, the study examined career growth among women journalists in Kenya and to do this, the study sought experiences of 21 women journalists in leadership positions. The study adopted qualitative approaches so as to understand more about their progression looking at the opportunities and barriers in newsrooms. From the interview, there were three key issues (overall gender inequality in Kenyan society, sexual harassment, and family and household duties) mainly hindered their career progression despite attaining the current status. For example, an interview with two women managing editors showed that anyone women journalists aspiring to climb the ladder, the academic qualification is normally listed has part of promotion criteria. However, women journalists find themselves at

crossroads because one’s past history is mentioned which may disqualify women especially those who had been missing work or delay in filling stories.

Yes, I am proud to have progressed well in the leadership position, but it wasn’t easy. Let me tell you! Up to now, I have not believed how I got here. It is God’s grace. I remember when my boss called me to his office to discuss the new role, he started reminding me house I loved family or every time they reprimanded me, I could mention that my house help had disappear” (Key Informant, May 6, 2024).

Although most women journalists are qualified, their extra issues complicate their career progression. One executive mentioned senior managers using sexual advancement to promise support in the promotion, “I remember one day I was told for me to grow upwards; I should honor some dates with him. I didn’t but failed in my first attempt to gain a leadership role”.

Although the things identified by this study are not new, previous studies have reported the same in other countries (De Vuyst, & Raeymaeckers, 2019; Simorangkir, 2020). This means that the situation in Kenya similar to other countries will not improve without key social changes mainly fairer distribution of unpaid work in households and looking at women’s requisite qualification without incorporating physical appearance through sexual advancements. It is important to note that media houses should consider gender issues especially that hinder women journalist’s progression especially climbing upward ladder; make promotion processes more transparent.

4.2.1 Career Growth among Women Journalists

Respondents were asked to indicate whether in the last five years, there are women appointed into managerial positions in your media organization. Although women journalists have displayed resilience in the media industry, this study found that fewer had been appointed into managerial positions in the last five years. Surprisingly, none were appointed into the top editorial jobs in the same period within the three counties. When critically examined, those 24% listed We asked respondents areas where women journalists have progressed well and most have specialized in certain area of coverage including politics, they have a unique way of telling stories and increased networking. The findings reveal women in the newsrooms enjoy more secure employment in administrative roles or non-managerial/editorial roles.

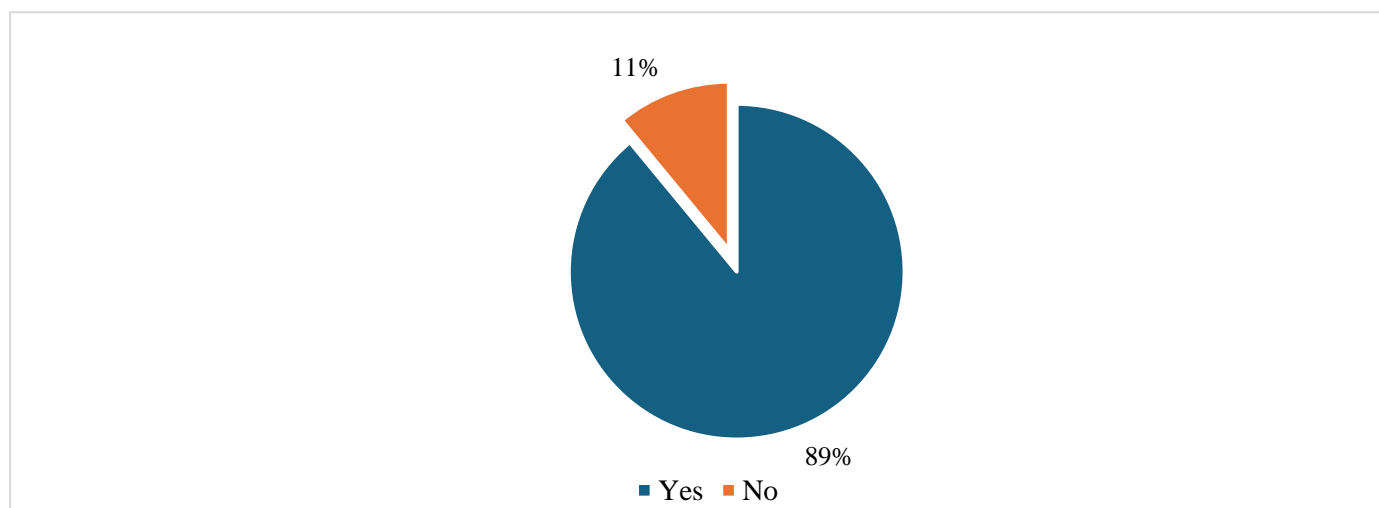


Figure 1
Women in Managerial Position

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study found that the working environment for women journalists presents unique issues attributed to domestic duties. Study participants view newsrooms are male dominated but because domestic responsibilities limits performance of women in ensuring sustainability of news flow leading to allocation of fewer or lighter roles. They also seem to realize that when women journalists spend more hours in the household level, male counterparts are busy climbing the up the corporate ladder and this disadvantages women journalists. This may explain why newsrooms globally are dominated by men and the more it happens, the more the wider gap between them (Anyauwu &

Augustine, 2013). They indicate that even male journalists who seem to have domestic responsibilities tend to miss or underperform, and this depicts how powerful these are in slowing one's performance.

Reflecting on women journalists work environment, study participants seem to point to disclose how women journalists should be handling changes in their personal and professional lives while trying to balance work and family life. This helps to acknowledge how gender shapes newsroom activities in exceptional times, but it becomes important to rethink such situations to avoid inequalities in the workplaces. This study suggests that in order to improve the working environment and performance of women journalists to allow them to compete with men, there is need for media organization to provide well-resourced spaces for women to handle some domestic issues such as childcare at office.

The findings showed that media organizations that offer additional benefits to women such as parenting leave days or subsidized day care facilities tend to motivate women journalists as they know their children are comfortable and becomes good for women to pursue their careers, as shown in these study findings. The findings concur with a study conducted in British which reported women journalists facing difficulties in balancing work and housework (Ross, 2001). Especially for those who are mothers, a culture of long working hours is worrying. For those considering motherhood in the-I8 future, reconciling family and career is considered an unattainable possibility.

The study findings depict the challenges facing women journalists especially in trying to cope in newsroom inequalities. Some of them are likely to resign while others might use their bodies to manage pressure from supervisors, especially those who don't understand the nature of women's domestic factors. This study did not delve on the number of women in leadership positions but the experiences of those already in those position. The study shows women journalists are holds same qualifications as men and they are capable of holding leadership positions. However, some family and households, sexual harassments as well as general gender inequalities present in the society hinders them from climbing the ladder or continuing in the journalism profession.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

This study focused mainly on domestic responsibilities and how they affect women journalist's career progression while at work. There is need for future studies to undertake a qualitative study to examine individual women journalists with young children to see how they are coping with them situation and how this affects their career progression. Also, future research can comparatively examine two media organizations to analyze women journalist's experiences with regards to domestic duties. This study relied survey on responses, but future studies can purposively be conducted on comparative analysis of women journalists in across media organizations in Kenya.

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