



Power, Patriarchy and Gender Discrimination in Zimbabwean Newsrooms

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Abbreviations	AIPPA:	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act	• Funded by the Public Affairs Section of the American Embassy in Harare and Hivos • Research conducted by Media Monitoring Africa, in partnership with Zimbabwe Union of Journalists and Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe • Photos courtesy of Zimbabwe Union of Journalists and Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe
	CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	
	FAMWZ:	Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe	
	ICESCR:	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	
	MDC:	Movement for Democratic Change	
	MMA:	Media Monitoring Africa	
	NUJ:	Norwegian Union of Journalists	
	ZANU-PF:	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front	
	ZUJ:	Zimbabwe Union of Journalists	

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By Wellington S. Radu and Yolanda T. Chekera

Foreword

One of the many recurring challenges within the media industry in Zimbabwe remains rooted in the unprofessional conduct of journalists and media practitioners, especially in how female and male media workers relate to one another. Embedded within a system of patriarchy, this erosion of professionalism, is one of the catalysts of gender discrimination, specifically sexual harassment; a cross-cutting issue that affects both women and men, albeit in vastly different ways and to varying degrees.

Against this background, in 2012, the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and the Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe (FAMWZ) with the support of the Norwegian Union of Journalists (NUJ) among other partners embarked on a campaign to raise awareness and to stimulate discussions on gender discrimination within the media.

It was in response to the findings of this campaign, that a need was recognized to conduct further research into the nature of gender discrimination in the country’s newsrooms. Such combined efforts enable the creation of sustained programmes necessary to raise the level of awareness around issues of harassment and discrimination, and more crucially to helping victims with information, legal assistance and emotional support.

One of the striking revelations by those who contributed to this study is that gender discrimination, and in particular sexual harassment, is institutionalised within Zimbabwe’s media organisations and remains under-reported. This state of affairs is magnified by the absence of specific legislation that deals with sexual harassment. In addition, media organisations do not have policies on gender discrimination, while codes of ethics on sexual harassment are not enforced. Thus, most victims either remain silent and/or leave their jobs when it becomes intolerable.

The non-reporting of sexual harassment gives rise to the general impression that workplace sexual harassment is not common or serious. Yet, it is a significant problem that continues to remain largely invisible, shrouded in secrecy, stigma, shame and fear of retaliation.It is a vicious cycle that ought to be continuously addressed.

The research findings further highlight the pressing need for all stakeholders to tackle this issue, starting by focusing on journalists and media workers to understand the many ways in which sexual harassment manifests in the workplace and to empower those affected to handle such problems.

ZUJ and FAMWZ commend Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) for its role in carrying out the research in this critical project, funded by the Public Affairs Section of the American Embassy and Hivos. This report would not have been possible without the participation of journalists and media workers who offered valuable insights.

By Abigail Gamanya (FAMWZ National Co-ordinator) and Foster Dongozi (ZUJ Secretary General)

Introduction

Gender discrimination is pervasive and is known to occur in almost every professional setting. Newsrooms and the media industry are no exception. As an umbrella term, it encompasses various forms of discrimination on the basis of gender, often negatively affecting women more than men. Perhaps the most emotionally, psychologically and financially damaging form of discrimination to those who experience it is sexual harassment and abuse.

In the Zimbabwean context, “sexual harassment has been topical not just in the media but also in other spheres of life”.¹ In this regard, the Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe (FAMWZ), Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and other like-minded organisations have been engaged in activities seeking to raise awareness around sexual harassment and other related issues in Zimbabwean newsrooms. While clearly necessary, it is imperative that these initiatives be complemented by rigorous research so that the strategies could be appropriately targeted. Consequently, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) partnered with ZUJ and FAMWZ to investigate the nature of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms in order to inform strategies to tackle the problem.

This report seeks to present a comprehensive understanding of how gender discrimination manifests itself in Zimbabwean newsrooms. This was achieved by exploring the lived experiences of both female and male media workers regarding gender discrimination. The report is based on an online survey administered, and in-depth interviews conducted, with female and male media workers in Zimbabwean newsrooms between April and June of 2013. The online survey and in-depth interviews sought to examine the:

- *Prevalence and nature of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms;*
- *Perceptions of gender discrimination among media workers in Zimbabwean newsrooms;*
- *Causes of gender discrimination as well as the challenges victims confront when lodging a complaint or when deciding to remain in the newsroom or abandon the journalism profession;*
- *Effect(s) of gender discrimination on both victims and perpetrators; and,*
- *Mechanisms (if any) currently in place in Zimbabwean newsrooms that deal with gender discrimination issues.*

Research into gender and issues relevant to gender equality and women's rights often insists on focusing its attention on women, and to some degree, logically so. However, this essentially alienates men and their obvious role in perpetuating gender inequality, or in this case gender discrimination. The risk in omitting men from such research is that it not only prevents us from understanding men's position on gender discrimination but also the revelation of potential solutions to this challenge; solutions proposed not only from the viewpoint of women, who are mostly on the receiving end of discrimination, but solutions developed through insight into the problem from the perspective of men. As such, we asked both female and male media workers about their perceptions of gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms.

The findings reveal interesting and concerning issues about gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms. Firstly, gender discrimination is highlighted as a problem so deeply entrenched and widespread within newsrooms that it is almost epidemic in proportion. Secondly, gender discrimination is institutionalised as it has become part of the daily lives of media workers. Thirdly, gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms is about power as those in positions of authority are usually the perpetrators against those in the lower echelons who are the victims.

Finally, mechanisms for dealing with gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms are seen by media workers as ineffective and inappropriately targeted. This requires comprehensive strategies that go beyond single-focus solutions to long-term shifts in institutional culture. It also requires mechanisms that are not only seen to address gender discrimination but also address this debilitating problem.

This report therefore serves as a baseline upon which methods of intervention can be devised and measures can be put in place to deal with gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms, leading to the creation of an enabling environment for both women and men to thrive in the newsrooms.

The report is divided into three parts. The first part briefly provides some background information regarding gender discrimination and the Zimbabwean media context. The second part details how information on gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms was gathered and analysed. The third part looks at how gender discrimination manifests itself in the country's newsrooms, and it ends with recommendations aimed towards not only reducing the practice but also eliminate it.

1. Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe & Zimbabwe Union of Journalists. Who Can I Tell? What Should I Do? Sexual Harassment in the Media, http://www.kubatana.net/Html/archive/media/130301famwz.asp?sector=GEN&year=0&range_start=1 (accessed, August 5, 2013).

1 Background information

This section provides a succinct definition of gender discrimination in its various forms. It also defines media and ends with a brief context of the media landscape in Zimbabwe as this has a bearing on how gender discrimination manifests in the country's newsrooms.

1.1 Defining gender discrimination

As a concept, gender refers to the “differences between males and females that are socially constructed, changeable over time and have wide variations within and between cultures.”² Unlike sex which is biologically determined, gender speaks to learned behaviours and expectations to fulfil one's image of being a man or a woman.³ Such behaviours and expectations can also be unlearned. Gender is also a socio-economic and political variable with which to analyse people's roles, responsibilities, constraints and opportunities.⁴

By extension, gender roles are “socially determined behaviours, tasks and responsibilities for women and men based on socially perceived differences that define how they should think, act and feel based on their respective sex.”⁵ Gender roles can and do change through individual choice and in response to events and processes such as the economic crisis in the Zimbabwean context. Gender discrimination can therefore be understood as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms that prevent a person from fully enjoying their rights.”⁶

1.1.1 Types of gender discrimination

Aside from sexual harassment, which is articulately defined by FAMWZ and ZUJ as “an unwelcome sexual advance that can range from a suggestion or promise of employment or promotion in return for sexual favours to the display of sexually offensive posters, cartoons, or drawings, or any other form of verbal or physical behaviour that the recipient regards as unwelcome or embarrassing,”⁷ other forms of gender discrimination include:

- *Financial inequality whereby women earn a lower wage than men although they share identical professional qualifications and credentials.*
- *Glass ceiling whereby women are prevented from competing for higher positions and climbing the professional ladder through fair and equal promotion in the workplace.*
- *Gender stereotypes whereby definitions of femininity and masculinity⁸ influence the types of jobs or story topics that female journalists are assigned compared to their male colleagues. For instance, Editors have the tendency to assign “soft news” like entertainment and lifestyle to female journalists and “hard news” such as politics, economics, and sports to male journalists.*
- *Pregnancy and motherhood, which are frequently used as factors upon which women are discriminated against and denied employment or promotion. These are unfairly perceived to be obstacles to a woman's ability to perform professionally. They are also anticipated as potential threats to a woman's long-term commitment to a job.*

As an extension of most of the above forms of discrimination, age or ageism, as well as a woman's physique and aesthetic appearance have been known to play a role in discrimination against women, especially in the media profession, namely broadcast media, where age and appearance often dictates success.

The presence of any form of gender discrimination described above can have a detrimental effect on professionals, in this case, mostly female reporters, resulting often in either the acceptance of on-going psychological and emotional trauma experienced on a daily basis in their bid to retain a job, or the termination of a woman's job, forcing her to leave the media industry altogether. Conversely, some women use gender stereotypes to their advantage. For example, because of how she looks, she may use that to get favours such as better assignments, promotions and perks from her male colleagues. This is corroborated by research on masculinity which has revealed that some women, in certain circumstances, feel that they can rely on the very threat of gender discrimination to gain advantage.⁹

1.2 Defining media

Media are much more than newspapers, radio and television.¹⁰ They encompass other interactive forms of communication that use the internet, including social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and MXit. The media also cover mobile phones, leaflets, posters and even messages on pens given out at conferences.

While valid, such an understanding of the media is too broad and therefore relatively meaningless because almost all forms of communication become media.¹¹ Therefore, in discussing media, this study explicitly focuses on media that work to provide some form of news, which seek to give a view/s of the world and events that take place.

2. Johanna Son, Gender and Development Glossary: A Tool for Journalists and Writers (Thailand & Philippines: IPS Asia-Pacific, 2010), 33.

3. Ibid. | 4. Ibid. | 5. Ibid., 40. | 6. Ibid., 36. | 7. Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe & Zimbabwe Union of Journalists. Who Can I Tell? What Should I Do? Sexual Harassment in the Media, http://www.kubatana.net/Html/archive/media/130301famwz.asp?sector=GEN&year=0&range_start=1 (accessed, August 5, 2013).

There is also a sense in which those that do so seek to have a level of credibility, which is then reinforced by an adherence to professional standards, ethics and codes.¹² Such media can be public-, private-, community- or state-owned. In addition, being widely accessible to the public, such media have a broader influence over audiences and/or act as change agents in society.¹³

1.2.1 Zimbabwean media context

The Zimbabwean media context is well-documented elsewhere.¹⁴ Suffice to say since the formation of the government of national unity between the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations in 2009, the government of Zimbabwe has issued licenses to a number of new newspapers including *NewsDay* and the *Daily News*, which was closed down in 2003 for failing to comply with the registration clauses in the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

The government also licensed two new privately run radio stations, *Star FM* and *ZiFM*. These new privately owned players have provided a measure of diversity but the ‘public’ media still remains in the hands of the government. Be that as it may, the country’s media landscape is still polarised along political lines. The country has a history of journalists being arrested for all sorts of various reasons including “undermining the authority” of the President. As a result, journalists continue to be under threat for doing their work with increased self-censorship for fear of criminal defamation suits. Also, owing to poor economic conditions and salaries that do not keep pace with inflation, journalistic corruption and cash incentives for coverage have become rampant.

These are some of the conditions under which we examined gender discrimination in the country’s newsrooms. As will appear more clearly in Section 3 of this report, some of the economic conditions have compounded gender discrimination in the country’s newsrooms.

2. How information on gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms was collected

The study into the prevalence and nature of gender discrimination in Zimbabwe’s newsrooms relied on 158 online survey responses and 20 in-depth interviews with both female and male media workers across the country.

The online survey was crucial in recording the raw statistical prevalence of the magnitude of gender discrimination while in-depth interviews were useful in documenting the various factors underpinning it. In-depth interviews provided informational depth and context that could not merely be measured in numbers but rather through the nuanced aspects of the personal experiences of those who have inflicted or suffered any form of gender discrimination, including their feelings, thoughts and frustrations.

2.1 How the online survey was administered anonymously

Given the sensitive nature of gender discrimination, it was agreed at a consultative meeting¹⁵ that was held in Harare on 1 February 2013 that an anonymous online survey will be administered among media workers across the country. All the stakeholders present at the meeting participated in developing, and commenting on the questions that appeared in the survey.

The survey consisted of 30 questions that were answered by media workers. The questions were distributed through a web link that was emailed to media workers across the country. The media workers’ email addresses were accessed through ZUJ’s email list as well as other email lists from media partners in Zimbabwe.

In order to guarantee anonymity on this topic, the responses were sent directly to a database hosted by MMA in Johannesburg, South Africa. In addition, information that could reveal the identity of the respondents was not required, unless otherwise specified by the respondent. With the intention of increasing the online survey uptake, ZUJ embarked on a campaign to encourage media workers across the country to participate in the survey.

As a result, 158 people responded to the survey. This is three times more than the number of people we expected to respond given the amount of questions and the amount of detail the questions required as well as the sensitive nature of the questions. Of the 158 respondents, 112 provided answers to all the questions and 46 provided answers to some of the questions, depending on how the questions were relevant to the respondents’ experiences. Following is the demographic information of the respondents.

Figure 1: Sex of respondents

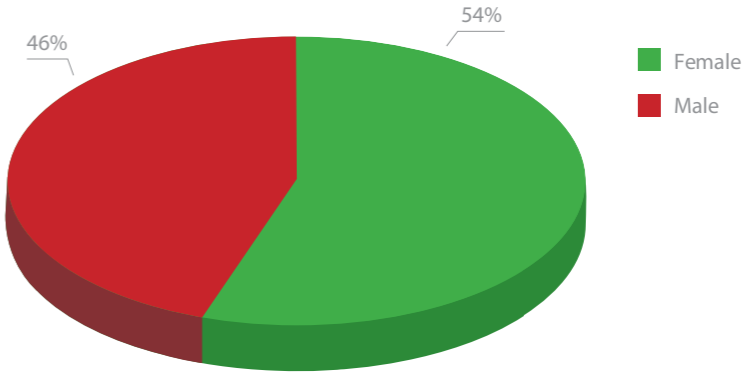


Figure 2: Age groups of respondents

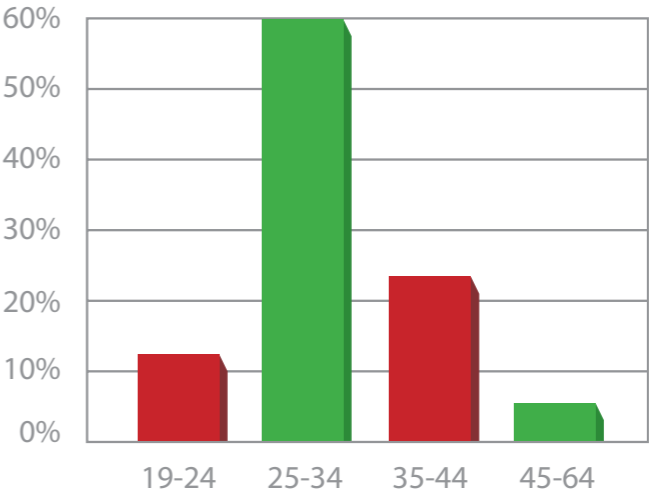
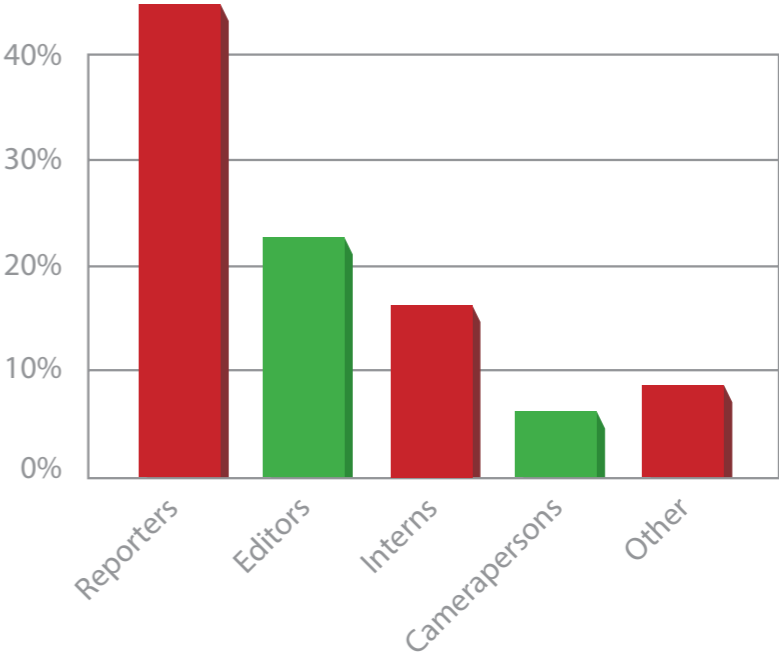


Figure 3: Positions respondents held



8. Femininity and masculinity refer to the “set of expectations about how women and men respectively, should behave, think and appear in a given society.” See Johanna Son, Gender and Development Glossary: A Tool for Journalists and Writers (Thailand & Philippines: IPS Asia-Pacific, 2010), 31. | 9. Sandra Banjac and Lethabo Dibeso, Masculinity in Media (Johannesburg: Media Monitoring Africa, 2014). | 10. Wellington S. Radu, Kgalalelo L. Morwe & William R. Bird, “Do the media in South Africa offer alternatives to violence in their coverage of protests?” *Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa*, Volume 30, Special Edition (2012): 39. | 11. Ibid. | 12. Ibid. | 13. Ibid.
14. See for example, African Media Barometer: Zimbabwe 2012 (Windhoek: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung); Freedom House, Zimbabwe, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2013/zimbabwe#UtmSndIW23s>; Committee to Protect Journalists, Zimbabwe, <https://www.cpj.org/africa/zimbabwe/>.

Figure 4: Provinces where respondents were based

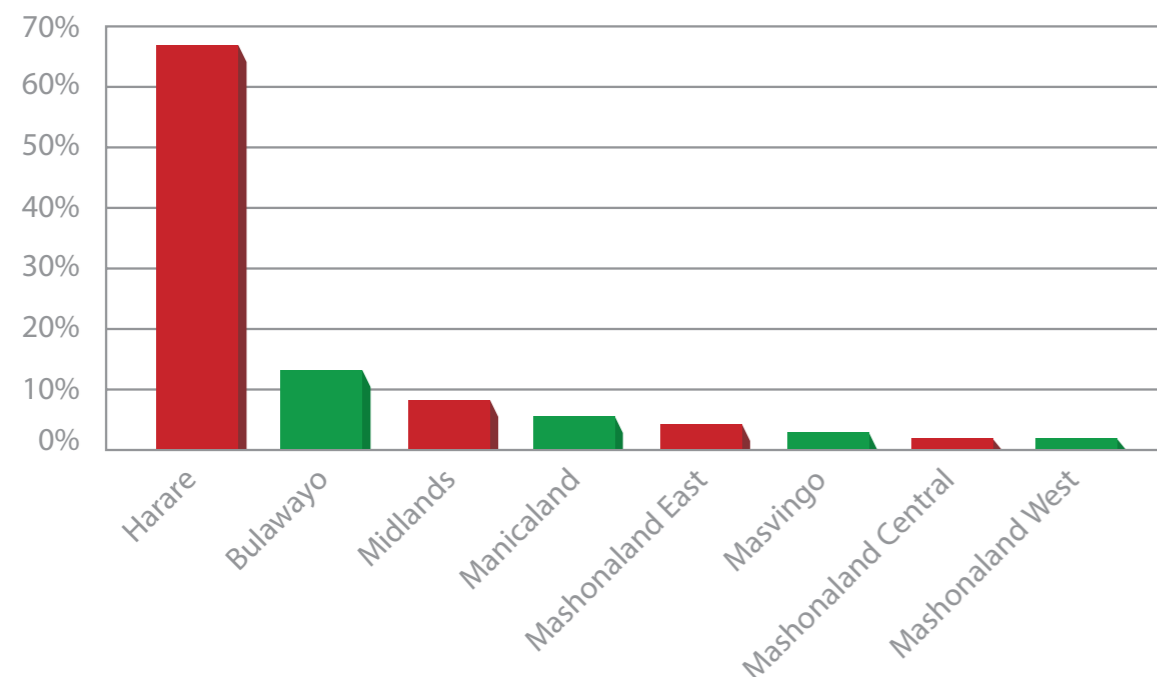


Figure 5: Types of media where respondents worked in

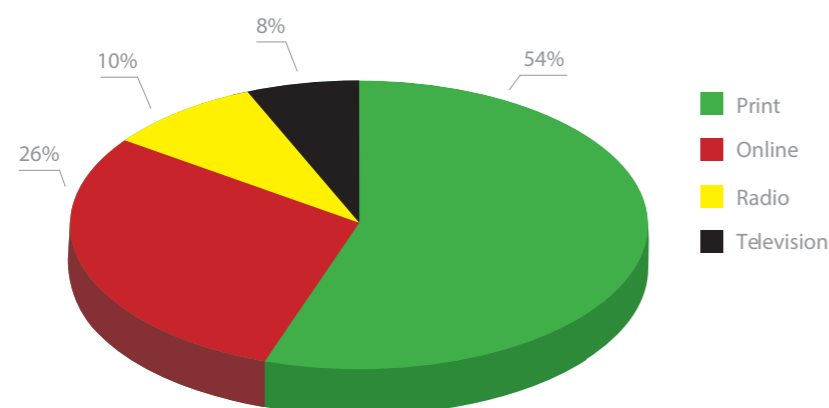
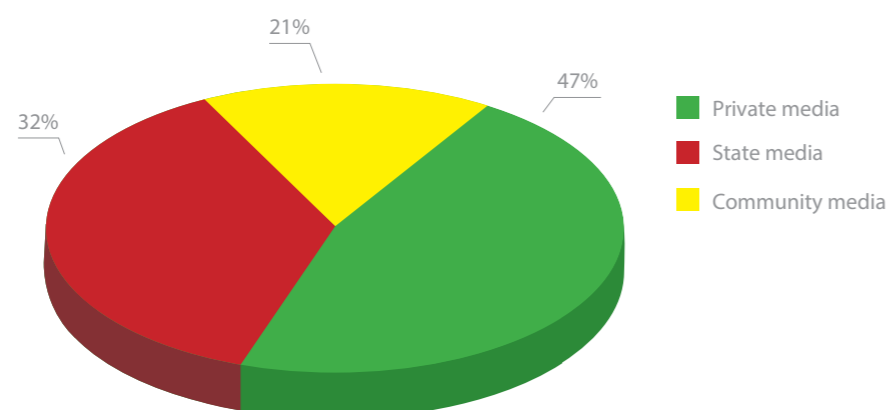


Figure 6: Ownership of media where respondents worked in



Over half¹⁶ of the respondents were female despite the fact that 87 per cent¹⁷ of the media workers in Zimbabwe are men. The low uptake by men could point to the perception that gender discrimination mostly affects women. Gender discrimination often affects those at the lower levels of the professional tier. This could be the reason why most of the respondents were within the 19 to 35 age group,¹⁸ as this is the group most likely to have professionals at lower levels. With regard to the positions respondents held in their respective media houses, almost half of them were Reporters.¹⁹ (Please note that with regard to respondents' positions, Reporters and Senior Reporters were classified under one category, Line Editors, Sub Editors and Editors-in-Chief were clustered together. Although Editors assumed different roles with varied impact on gender discrimination, they were clustered together because ultimately they wield some form of power in the newsrooms. Camerapersons and Photographers were combined and the category 'Other' was allocated to those whose positions could not be categorised in the groups described above).

Most of the respondents were based in Harare and Bulawayo combined.²⁰ This was expected because most of the media houses are based in the country's major cities. Despite the changing nature of media that is moving into the digital and online space the world over, three quarters of the respondents were employed in traditional media, that is, print, radio and television.²¹ This is a reflection of the Zimbabwean media terrain, which is gradually moving into the online space.

Despite the dominance of state media in Zimbabwe, the majority of the respondents came from private and community media combined.²²

Perhaps this is an indication of the level of self-censorship state media workers exercise. It is therefore crucial to read the findings of this report in Section 3 taking into account the demographic attributes of the respondents as they may have a bearing on the responses they provided.

2.1.1 Why an online survey was used to gather information anonymously

The logic of using an online survey to gather information about gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms stemmed from the fact that "asking questions is an effective way of acquiring information of all kinds, assuming of course that the person answering is able and willing to respond accurately".²³

It also derived from the fact that we can learn about an issue affecting society such as gender discrimination by examining how it manifests itself within a small sector of society like the media. Importantly, gender discrimination is a sensitive issue especially for victims, hence administering an online questionnaire guaranteed anonymity for them to express their feelings, thoughts and frustrations about the issue. Using an online survey also allowed for a completely controlled and standardised analysis and interpretation of information in statistical forms, which was complemented by qualitative information provided through in-depth interviews.

2.2 How in-depth interviews were conducted

Based on the information collected through the online survey, in-depth interview questions were carefully formulated with the intention of significantly expanding on the information already sought and revealed in the online survey. The interviewees were purposefully selected in order to capture the views of those who hold more power as well as those who wield less power in the newsrooms.

This allowed us to hear the perspectives of potential perpetrators and victims of gender discrimination. We therefore conducted 20 forty-five minute in-depth interviews with both male and female media workers including Editors, Reporters, Camera-persons and Interns towards the end of June 2013. With the permission from the interviewees, 17 of the 20 interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, allowing for analysis in a methodical way.

2.2.1 Why in-depth interviews were used to collect information

Interviews are one of the most commonly used qualitative research techniques. Their obvious benefit to research is "their openness" as they allow the interviewer endless opportunity and potential to get information from the interview.²⁴

We utilised in-depth interviews because they allowed us to follow a set list of questions making for easier standardised comparison across all interviews, but also allowed us to remain casual and open to diversions, and therefore allowing also the interviewee to deviate from the questions so as to explore information that may not have been anticipated or covered by the prepared questions.²⁵

15. The consultative meeting was organised by the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and brought together a total of 17 representatives from ZUJ, Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe (FAMWZ), Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ), Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ), Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe Chapter (MISA-Zimbabwe), H-Metro, Newsway, ZBC, journalists and gender activists.

16. See Figure 1. | 17. See Sikhonzile Ndlovu and Miriam Madiwa, Glass Ceilings. Women and men in Southern Africa media – Zimbabwe (Johannesburg: Gender Links, 2009), 1, <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/glass-ceiling-report-zimbabwe-2009-08-07> (accessed October 6, 2013). | 18. See Figure 2. | 19. See Figure 3. | 20. See Figure 4. | 21. See Figure 5. | 22. See Figure 6.

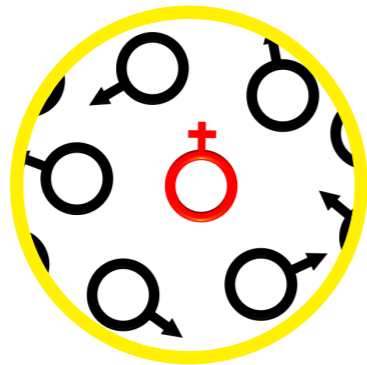
23. Howard Schuman, "Sense and nonsense about surveys" Context, summer, 40(7), (2002): 40.

2.3 Limitations of using an online survey and in-depth interviews to gather information

The value of survey results is not only determined by the number of people who respond to the questions but also by the way the respondents were identified.²⁶ In that regard, we relied on ZUJ's email list (which we were informed consists of approximately 1000 media practitioners) as well as other links that were provided by local media organisations. This meant that most media workers had the opportunity to respond to the survey. We cannot be certain as to the effects of those who decided not to respond, hence obtaining a high response rate was our priority and we received three times more than the number of responses we had originally anticipated.

Survey results are also dependent on the form, wording and context of the questions asked as well as the people who answer them.²⁷ In addition, answers to survey questions also depend on the form in which the questions are asked. As such, by varying the form, wording and context of the questions we asked,²⁸ we were able to gain insights into how gender discrimination manifests itself in Zimbabwean newsrooms.

Since surveys ask the same questions in the same order of every respondent, they do not obtain full reports.²⁹ Instead, the information they obtain from one person is fragmentary, made up of bits and pieces of attitudes and observations and appraisals.³⁰ For that reason, we used in-depth interviews to get more insights into the prevalence and nature of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms. However, because the fuller responses we obtained through in-depth interviews could not be easily categorised, our analysis of the responses relied more on interpretation, summary and integration. This required more time, care and consideration in order to provide a deeper understanding of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms. Overall, combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to examine gender discrimination ensured that where one method failed the other complemented.



The findings that follow are therefore a result of mixed methods that offer a nuanced understanding of how gender discrimination manifests itself in the country's newsrooms.

24. Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), 84. | 25. Ibid.

26. Howard Schuman, "Sense and nonsense about surveys" *Context*, summer, 40(7), (2002): 40. | 27. Ibid., 42. | 28. Ibid., 43.

29. Robert S. Weiss, *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 2. | 30. Ibid.

3. How gender discrimination manifests in Zimbabwean newsrooms

This section details the nature and prevalence of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms as seen and experienced by the country's media workers. It exposes that gender discrimination is a very significant challenge that is largely fuelled by power and patriarchy as perpetrators are predominantly men who exert their power on women who hold lower positions in the country's newsrooms.

It identifies three areas that could be focused on in order to reduce gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms. These are: legislation and policies, sustained awareness raising, and creating an environment wherein both women and men thrive in the country's newsrooms.

3.1 How do Zimbabwean media workers understand gender discrimination?

It is important for media workers to have a clear understanding of gender discrimination in its various forms. Without a crucial understanding it becomes impossible for both victims and sometimes perpetrators to recognise situations in which gender discrimination takes place, particularly in societies where gender roles are largely embedded in patriarchy.³¹ For this reason, we sought to learn how Zimbabwean media workers understand gender discrimination.

We found that the majority of media workers conflate gender and sex. In other words, the differences between females and males that are socially constructed, changeable over time and have wide variations within and between cultures are conflated with the biological characteristics that define human beings at birth. Such conflation is problematic in that it may lead some media workers to assume that gender roles, just like sex, are biological determined and therefore not subjected to scrutiny and in turn cannot be challenged, let alone changed.

We also found that some media workers understand gender discrimination specifically as an exclusion or restriction on the basis of being female. Their responses highlighted gender discrimination as a phenomenon only affecting female media workers as illustrated by the following quotations.

"[Gender discrimination is] whereby women are denied of their opportunities to aim higher and participate on the basis that they are women" – Respondent.

"[Gender discrimination refers to] any forms of practices that forbid female participation at high levels of decision making as well as refusal to accept suggestions from female decision makers as well as failure by organisations to promote females to high levels of managerial posts regardless of their qualifications" – Respondent.

Such responses are hardly surprising taking into account that traditionally the face of gender discrimination has been female and as a result most campaigns against discrimination have been targeted at women. In addition, because of the belief that men are supposed to be strong, they are also less likely to be forthcoming with information when they have been victims of gender discrimination.

In spite of these narrow conceptualisations of gender discrimination, we also found that an overwhelming number of media workers understand gender discrimination in its broad spectrum. In defining gender discrimination, they did not only limit themselves to its more recognised forms such as sexual harassment. What is also heartening is that the majority of media workers believe that at the root of gender discrimination is an infringement that prevents a person from fully enjoying their rights within the workplace. This is encouraging because it links gender discrimination to human rights that are guaranteed in the country's new Constitution.³²

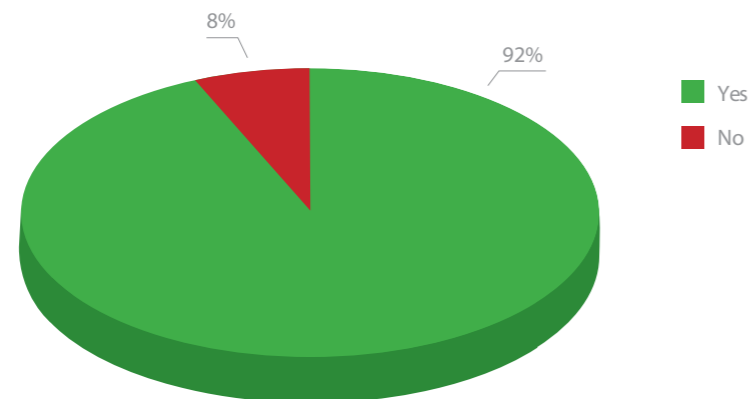
3.2 Is gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms a problem?

Effects of gender discrimination are not only felt by the victims of the practice but the consequences have a potential to extend to the organisations they work in. As noted by FAMWZ and ZUJ, "the [media] industry incrementally loses something as the practice drives out otherwise good journalists."³³

Further, there may be a reduction in productivity and motivation of not only the person concerned but also of colleagues who are privy to what is happening. Coupled with the costs of potential litigation and loss of reputation, a lack of attention to gender discrimination may prove costly in many respects. Against this backdrop we sought to enquire into the prevalence of gender discrimination by asking media workers whether they thought gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms was a problem. Their responses are graphically shown below.

31. We loosely refer to patriarchy as the dominance of men over women in spheres of life, including, but not limited to economic, social and cultural spheres. In other words, patriarchy is a social system that propagates male superiority, power and control over women as natural. In patriarchal societies, leadership roles, control of valuable resources and decision making are a preserve of men. As a result, patriarchy oppresses, exploits and subordinates women.

Figure 7: Whether gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms is a problem or not



It is clear that gender discrimination is a huge problem in Zimbabwean newsrooms, with gender stereotypes and sexual harassment as its face.³⁴ That 92 per cent think that gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms is a problem is telling as it reveals the views of both female and male media workers.³⁵ An acknowledgement by men of gender discrimination as a problem is of immense value particularly when we take into account that often the perpetrators of gender discrimination are likely to be men.³⁶ This is of importance as it could have a bearing on any efforts taken to curb the problem. Perhaps more telling are some of the reasons media workers think that gender discrimination is a problem as reflected below.

“Presently newsrooms are manned by fewer women and yet training colleges actually have more women training as journalists. In most instances, the [female] journalists last a year or two before they opt for public relations posts which are regarded a safer haven. The newsroom has generally been regarded a no-go area for women, with those that have survived, having to summon all their muscle to fight for their space. Female journalists, those that survive the newsroom, are often given softer beats while the hard stuff such as politics is reserved for their male counterparts. This is a result of stereotyping while socialisation has made men feel superior to their counterparts. Women are supposed to be timid. Newsrooms are generally very patriarchal. Women also face abuse in newsrooms. In some instances they have to give sexual favours to male bosses to have their jobs secured” - **Respondent.**

“I believe that gender discrimination is a problem in Zimbabwean newsrooms because more men still occupy influential positions as compared to women. Even the number of women in the newsroom remains low as compared to men because most women cannot stand the discrimination hence they move out of the newsrooms at the end of the day. Women are subjected to the so called “soft” beats such as Arts while men are assigned to the “hard” beats such as Politics” - **Respondent.**

“Female journalists are often taken advantage of and asked to give sex (sic) for promotions or other important assignments. This culture is rampant in Zimbabwean newsrooms” - **Respondent.**

These sentiments relating to testosterone-filled newsrooms and allocation of women to cover so called “soft” issues as well as widespread requests for sexual favours cut across the reasons given by the majority of media workers.

They do point to opportunities that those interested in curbing gender discrimination could start exploring in order to make Zimbabwean newsrooms more female-friendly.

32. Constitution of Zimbabwe (Final Draft: 31 January 2013), <http://www.gta.gov.zw/> (accessed, September 20, 2013).

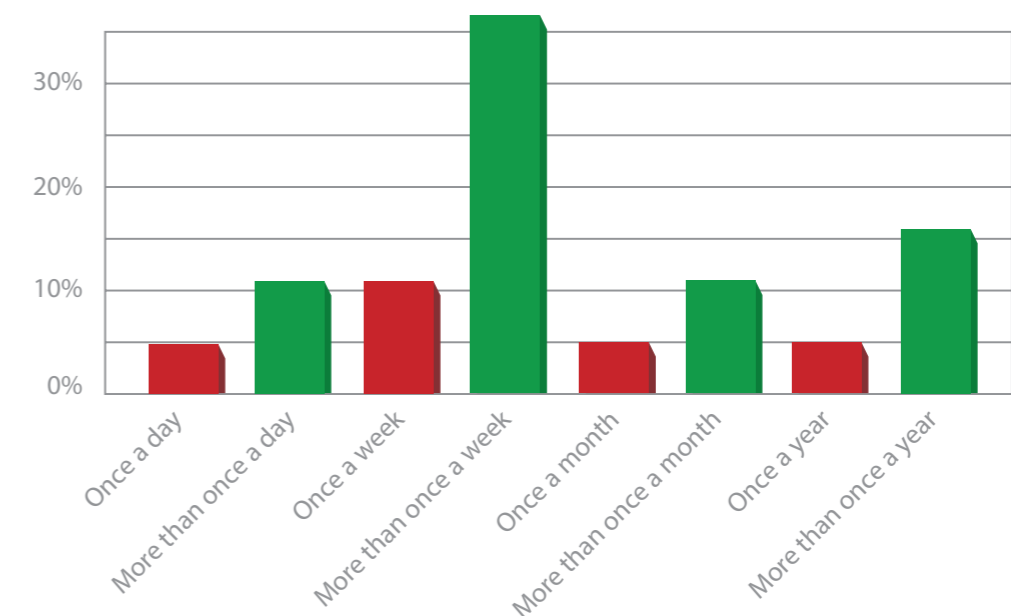
33. See Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe & Zimbabwe Union of Journalists. Who Can I Tell? What Should I Do? Sexual Harassment in the Media, http://www.kubatana.net/Html/archive/media/130301famwz.asp?sector=GEN&year=0&range_start=1 (accessed, August 5, 2013). | 34. See section 3.6 on the forms of gender discrimination that are prevalent in Zimbabwean newsrooms. | 35. See Figure 1 on the sex of respondents.

36. See section 3.5 on the perpetrators of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms.

3.3 How often does gender discrimination take place in Zimbabwean newsrooms?

In order to further establish how big a problem gender discrimination is in Zimbabwean newsrooms, we asked those media workers who had been victims of the practice how often it occurred. Their responses revealed startling statistics shown below.

Figure 8: How often gender discrimination occurs in Zimbabwean newsrooms



The majority indicated that it happened more than once a week. In fact, 64 per cent noted that it ranged from more than once a day to more than once a week. If gender discrimination happens almost on a daily basis, then two issues could be raised. The one is; it could be argued that gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms is institutionalised. In other words, it has become part and parcel of the daily lives of media workers in Zimbabwean newsrooms.

Therefore, gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms is not only a big problem, but a huge problem that has been normalised.

The problem with institutionalisation or normalisation of gender discrimination is that media workers may dismiss some of it as part of acceptable newsroom culture. The other issue is; how is it possible that gender discrimination has been allowed to fester to a point where it has become normal?

The possible reason could be the effects of patriarchy as will become clear in Section 3.7 on the causes of gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms. Be that as it may, if gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms has been allowed to fester to a point of normalcy, then it requires urgent attention.

3.4. Who are the victims of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms?

The entrenchment of patriarchy and its persistence in most societies has ensured that victims of gender discrimination have remained largely women. This is certainly true for Zimbabwean newsrooms as more than two thirds (76 per cent) of the victims were women.

This is also corroborated by the number of complaints ZUJ received from female victims compared to male victims. With this in mind, we sought to find out the roles or positions of victims of gender discrimination. This allowed us to determine how power feeds into gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms as reflected below.

Figure 9: Victims of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms by role

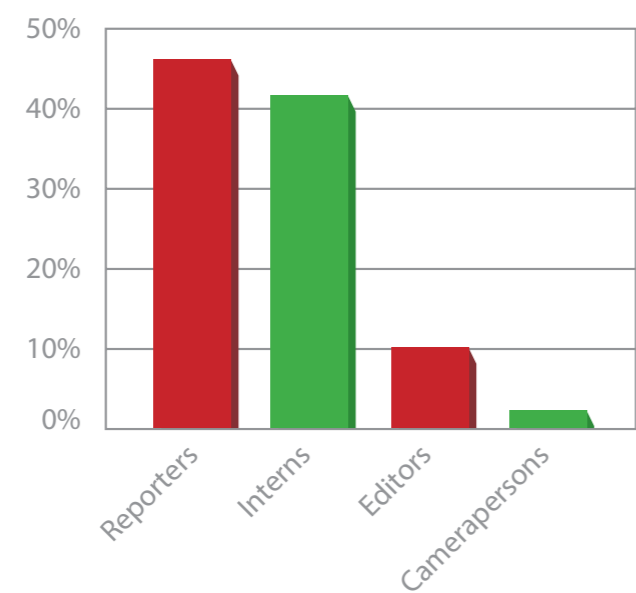


Figure 10: Victims of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms by sex

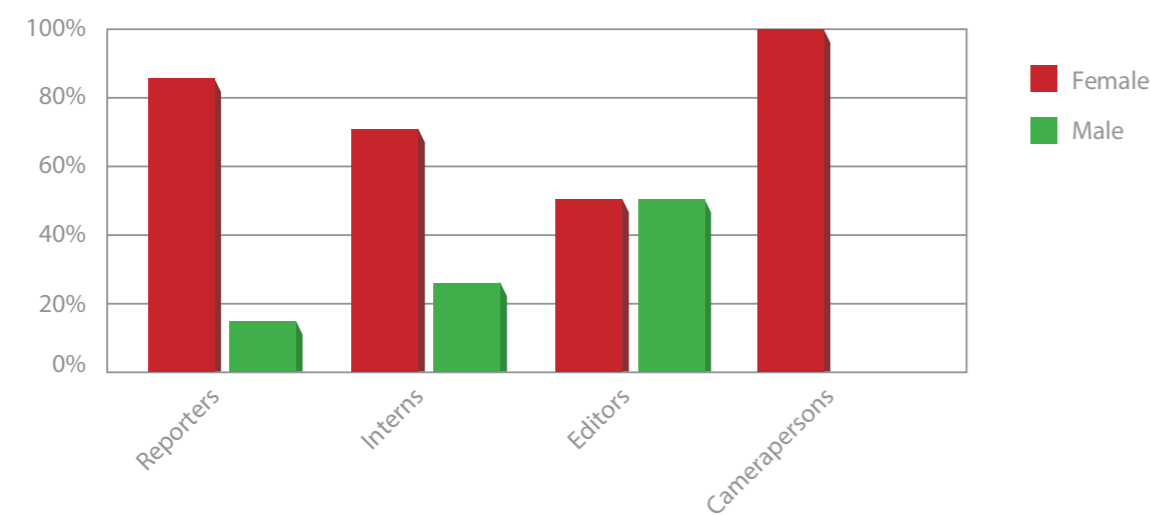


Figure 9 should be read in conjunction with Figure 10. For example, of the 46 per cent Reporters who were victims of gender discrimination (Figure 9), 84 per cent are female and 16 per cent are male (Figure 10). As reflected in Figures 9 and 10, and as expected, gender discrimination is more prevalent at the lower levels of the profession, partly because they are the foot soldiers and also because they tend to be where most of the women are, and because they tend to be the most junior positions. The probable reason Editors and Camerapersons are less likely to be victims of gender discrimination is because they are predominantly male, and also most powerful.

Therefore, victims of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms are not only women but also the least powerful in the newsrooms.

This means that strategies to reduce gender discrimination in the country’s newsrooms should focus on empowering women, among other things.

3.5 Who are the perpetrators of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms?

Patriarchy has also ensured that perpetrators of gender discrimination are mostly men. In this instance statistics also indicated that 84 per cent of perpetrators are men. Although finding out the sex of perpetrators is important, we were more interested in knowing the positions of perpetrators.

In other words, we sought to find out the positions that perpetrators of gender discrimination occupy in the newsrooms as this would allow for targeted strategies to solve the problem. We therefore asked respondents to tell us the positions of the people who had discriminated them. We found that the majority of perpetrators are Editors as shown in the Figure 11 below.

Figure 11: Perpetrators of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms by role

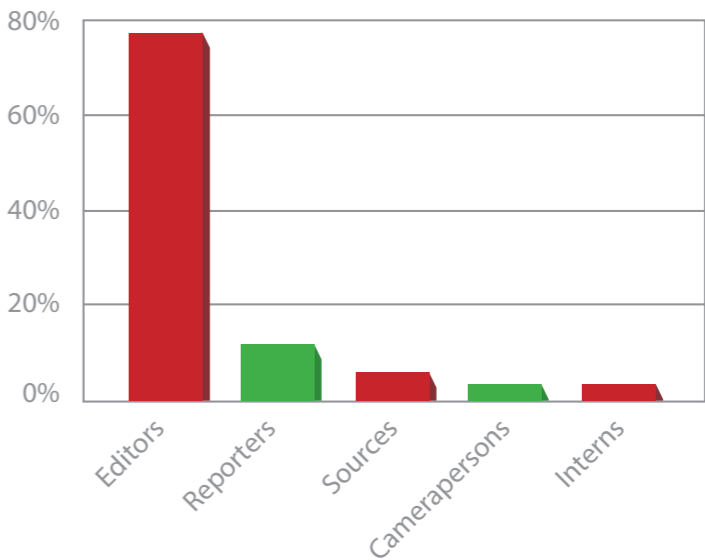
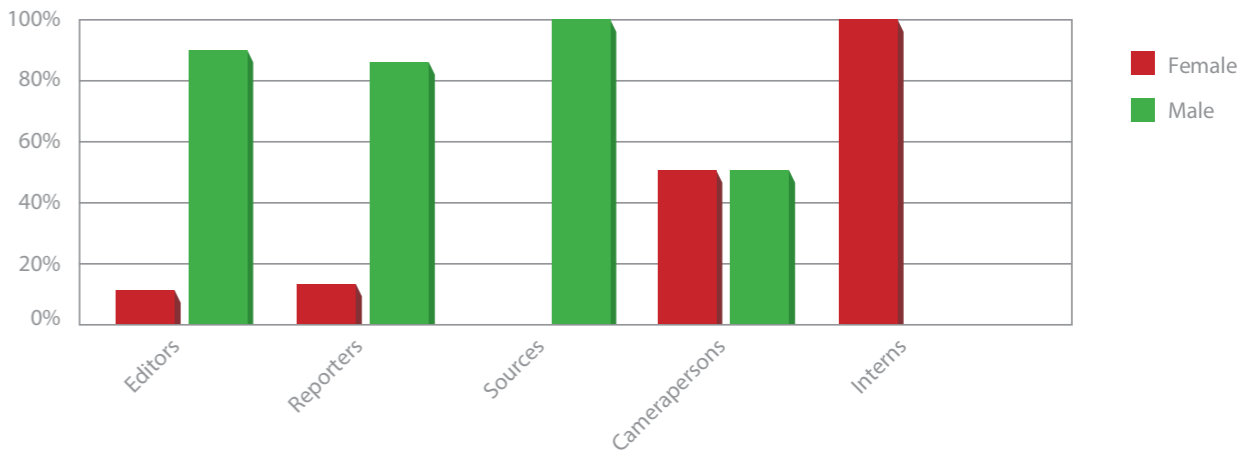


Figure 12: Perpetrators of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms by sex



Just like Figures 9 and 10, Figure 11 should be read together with Figure 12. For instance, of the 78 per cent Editors who were identified as perpetrators of gender discrimination (Figure 11), 90 per cent are male and 10 per cent are female (Figure 12). The findings confirm the notion highlighted earlier that power dynamics are largely at the centre of gender discrimination with those in positions of authority most likely to be the perpetrators.

Given that this is the case, it is clear that gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms is not just a gender issue but a critical leadership issue.

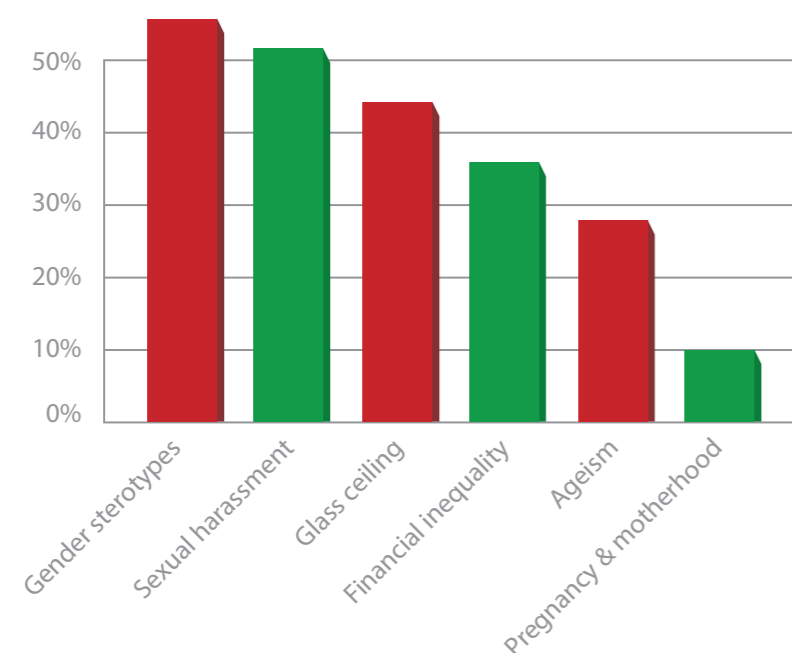
That 90 per cent of the Editors and 89 per cent of the Reporters who are perpetrators are male confirms that perpetrators of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms are predominantly men. This requires not only their involvement in strategies that seek to eradicate the practice but also strategies targeted at them.

36. Which forms of gender discrimination are prevalent in Zimbabwean newsrooms?

As highlighted earlier, gender discrimination manifests itself in various forms from the overt to the covert. We therefore sought to identify the most prevalent types of gender discrimination by asking respondents to state the types of gender discrimination that they had been subjected to or witnessed.

We were cognisant of the fact that one person could experience more than one type of gender discrimination hence the respondents were given the option of choosing more than one type of discrimination where applicable. This explains why the percentages in the Figure 13 below add up to 225.

Figure 13: Common types of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms



It is clear that victims of gender discrimination have experienced not just one but several forms of the practice. That is probably why 92 per cent of the respondents think that gender discrimination is a problem in the country's newsrooms.³⁷ As revealed above, the majority of the victims were subjected to gender stereotypes. It is worth noting that gender stereotypes affect both men and women as some men indicated that they were victims of this form of gender discrimination. Generally, gender stereotypes emanate from societal roles that define what is feminine and what is masculine.

These roles (intentional or unintentional) lead to female reporters being assigned to "soft" beats while their male counterparts get "hard" beats. This is not surprising because as noted earlier, gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms is rooted within patriarchy. This is also evident from some of the scenarios victims experienced gender discrimination as highlighted below.

"There was a demonstration by Men/Women of Zimbabwe Arise that happened in town. I was busy compiling final touches to a feature on waste management that was due in the next four hours. My female colleague journalist was not doing anything at that time. Busy as I was, my male Editor told me to leave what I was doing to cover the demo right away. I explained that I was busy on something and that my female colleague had indicated she was not busy and was willing to cover anything juicy and more hard news in order that she might gain some experience. The Editor got angry and scolded me saying I was heartless and rude since I preferred to send a woman, the weaker sex, to a war zone while I sat on my laurels" - Respondent.

"Well, I was told I was too young and soft to be a journalist because I was quiet and fresh from college. One day my diary which was a potential lead story was taken away from me because it was too big for an intern let alone a young woman" - Respondent.

"I was always told that I am young, not fit to be journalist because I was (sic) a woman and that I could not do tougher diaries because they were too difficult for a woman" - Respondent.

"I am left out at meetings and crucial discussions and it's because male journos and my bosses tend to think that they are my think tanks. They speak on behalf of me and yet I am there to speak for myself. This has happened throughout my experience as a journalist that spans over [a long time]" - Respondent.

"When I was sent to collect stories I was told that I should use my money and there was no money for communication. This was a difficult task because I had no cash. I tried my tricks to get things done but only to discover later [that] my female counterparts have (sic) been given funds to make their work easier. When I brought [up] the matter, I was told that females are more disadvantaged than males so it is good to aid them" - Respondent.

These scenarios and sentiments speak to gender stereotypes that are rooted in how Zimbabwean societies more generally perceive women and men. Women are seen as the weaker sex and therefore require aid and protection. Men on the other hand are perceived as tough and ready to be deployed in war zones. Whether this is right or wrong is another issue, but it intentionally or unintentionally plays a fundamental role in how media workers are assigned or not assigned stories to cover.

Another type of gender discrimination that is rampant in Zimbabwean newsrooms is of course sexual harassment as more than half of the victims indicated that they have experienced it. Interestingly, the statistics indicate that all the respondents who attested to having been victims of sexual harassment were women. Some of the scenarios of sexual harassment that female media workers in Zimbabwean newsrooms described as having experienced are quite disturbing as evidenced by the quotations below.

"My fellow workmate used to sexually harass me in front of other workmates. He used to touch me [in a] way I did not want yet I respected him. He would kiss me and tell people that I'm his second wife. People thought he was just joking because they did not know that [he] would send me his nude pictures on my phone and when I told him I did not like that he would be harsh and harass me at times" - Respondent.

"I was emailed and told my breasts were the highlight of our diary meetings" - Respondent.

"My boss would always call me after work (I mean late at night) and would openly say he was thinking of me. At one moment he kissed me on the neck" - Respondent.

"I was told by the Editor that I should be pampering him, that I should bond with him. In addition, I should visit his home for events such as private braais" - Respondent.

"My boss would give an example using me, holding me even on my waist and sometimes I would have to go on errands with him and he would touch me unnecessarily" - Respondent.

"A senior reporter within my department was drunk and he grabbed my breast using force in front of my workmates right in the newsroom. He used to describe my body structure in a way that offends me such that I lost respect from other workmates" - Respondent.

"I would go for a news assignment and a particular photographer would insist on going with me. He would molest me whilst on assignment. At times he would, in exchange for beer/other favours from sources, share my mobile number and have me harassed against my will" - Respondent.



That some of the instances of harassment took place in front of other colleagues is not only possibly even more humiliating but they highlight the institutionalisation and normalisation of sexual harassment in those newsrooms. It is also indicative of an environment that fosters discrimination where perpetrators are brazen and clearly believe that they cannot be held accountable for their actions.

This makes perpetrators act as if that they have right to sexually harass other people while victims accept it is part of their lived experience. If sexual harassment is normalised, then solutions to it will require innovation and strategic approaches.

33. See Figure 7 on whether gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms is a problem or not.

3.7 What are the main causes of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms?

The causes of gender discrimination are crucial in so far as they can inform ideas and strategies to combat the practice. As such, we wanted to find out from the media workers what they perceived as the main causes of gender discrimination in their respective newsrooms. We found that, by and large, Zimbabwean media workers see patriarchy as the major contributing factor to how women's and men's capabilities are perceived in the newsrooms.

According to patriarchal values men are considered as superior in comparison to women and their roles are defined in the public sphere while women are relegated to the private sphere with minimal contributions to make outside of the home environment. Women tend to be viewed as weak and inadequately equipped for newsrooms and this translates into them being assigned tasks that are considered less challenging and being overlooked for promotion to senior positions. In addition, because there is a lack of acknowledgement of the dual role that women play as professionals and also their responsibilities within the home, their commitment to their jobs is often questioned.

The statements below by some of the respondents perfectly capture the role that patriarchy plays in perpetuating gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms.

"Discrimination in newsrooms occurs because people have been accustomed to the patriarchal society where women are, according to culture, assigned less challenging and arduous tasks. In the past, the girl child was given less chances of progressing with education and in the end, less women possess higher educational qualifications compared to men" - Respondent.

"...Culture and religion are also to blame for this discrimination. Our cultures and religions tend to place men above women" - Respondent.

"I think it's mainly an issue of perception. Generally women are seen as less assertive or lazy by some Editors. This can be clearly shown in the way how (sic) stories are allocated to reporters by an editor. For example, if it's a story about an election or a rally a male reporter would be assigned and if it's a donation or a health story a female reporter would be assigned by the Editor..The other issue is that nowadays female reporters in the newsroom are married and have other responsibilities that they have to take care of. For instance, if one is pregnant they would require some time off to visit the gynaecologist and after the birth of the child they would require breast feeding time. At the end of the day female reporters require more off days to attend family issues compared their male counterparts" - Respondent.

In relation to how women and men balance their work and private lives, one respondent said:

"Women experience greater difficulties than men when it comes to balancing work and private life. Family, care and domestic responsibilities are still not equally shared. The task of looking after dependent family members is largely borne by women. Far more women than men choose to take parental leave. This fact, together with the lack of facilities for childcare and elderly care, means that women are often forced to exit the labour market..." - Respondent.

Clearly, root causes of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms are embedded in patriarchy. These patriarchal values are strengthened by religion and other socio-cultural norms and values. As a result, these driving factors are far more challenging to combat and require on-going, long-term commitment by various stakeholders who can facilitate a shift in the way women and men relate to each other and are treated, not only on a professional level, but in all other spheres. Perhaps a point worth noting is that we also found that in a society where patriarchy shapes people's thinking and actions, it is quite possible for gender discrimination to be perceived by a "victim" while on the other hand the alleged perpetrator believes he or she is showing concern and being considerate by allocating what are considered less arduous assignments to female media workers.

Apart from patriarchy, Zimbabwean media workers highlighted poverty, high levels of unemployment and social inequality as some of the causes of gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms. This, they said, leads to those who wield power to exert their power on the vulnerable job seekers. Media workers also blamed the lack of deliberate policies to promote gender equality in some newsrooms and a lack of will by some Editors to push for fair gender representation as some of the factors that compound gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms.

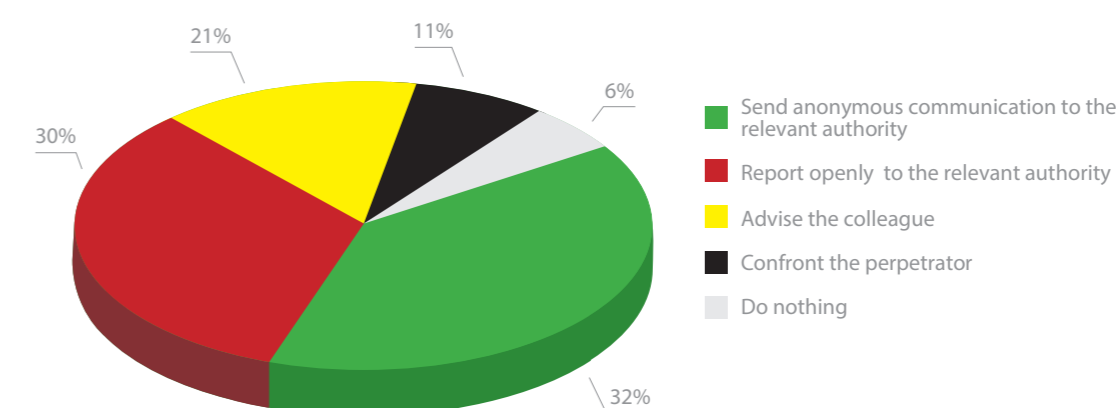
The lack of policies and management will is understood by media workers to emanate from the lack of knowledge on the part of policy makers and newsroom managers (read Editors) about gender dynamics and how they affect all sectors of development.

3.8 How do media workers in Zimbabwean newsrooms respond to gender discrimination?

We felt it was crucial to ascertain the response of media workers to gender discrimination mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the way media workers respond to gender discrimination is indicative of the type of environment that exists in newsrooms when it comes to dealing with gender discrimination. Secondly, any information gleaned from the responses would have a bearing on mapping what needs to be done. Therefore, the response given to gender discrimination within the workplace, be it by those in positions of authority or by the victims of the practice, is of crucial importance to both the prevention and the fight against the practice.

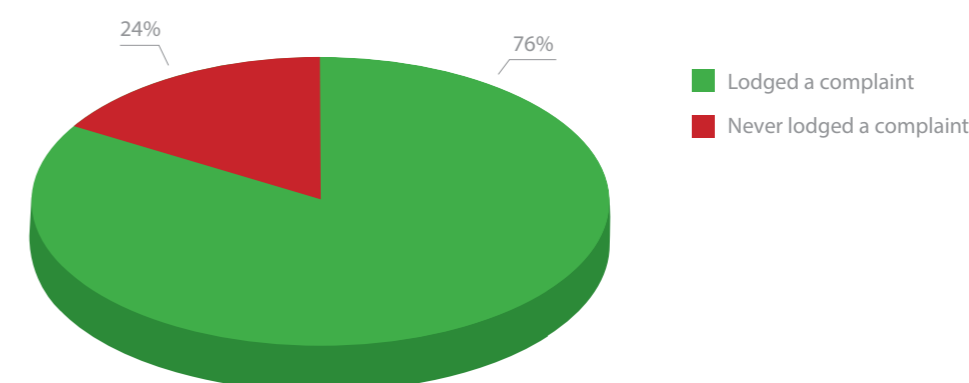
Asked what they would do if a colleague was discriminated, an overwhelming number of media workers indicated that they would take some form of action as evidenced by Figure 14 below.

Figure 14: What Zimbabwean media workers would do when a colleague experiences gender discrimination



The large number of media workers willing to take some form of action suggests that there is an understanding by the majority that the practice is wrong and there is need for it to be stamped out. This is certainly so because 92 per cent of the media workers indicated that gender discrimination is a problem in the country's newsrooms.³⁸ On the other hand, when we asked whether media workers who had been subjected to gender discrimination had lodged any complaint, we found the results below.

Figure 15: Whether victims of gender discrimination lodged a complaint or not



At first glance, the indication that just under a quarter of the victims actually filed a complaint seems significant given the general tendency not to complain. It may well be that this is due to the level of discrimination being so severe that victims felt they had no choice but to complain or it may be that the discrimination was on-going and to the point where a small offence was the final straw.

Sadly we do not have a baseline against which to measure whether the figure is actually significant but it indicates an area of future research. Although 24 per cent specified that they lodged a complaint, indications are that often very little comes out of

it. In one instance the victim indicated that after lodging a complaint, the alleged perpetrator was given a warning. The victim however could not be certain of this as both the victim and the alleged perpetrator were never brought before a disciplinary committee or process. Two weeks after the victim had lodged a complaint, she was laid off. This seems to validate perceptions of what happens when those in power are the alleged perpetrators.

That 76 per cent of the victims have never lodged a complaint is concerning in light of Figure 15. It is concerning because it reveals a disjuncture between what media workers would want to do (Figure 14) and what they really do (Figure 15) when they have actually suffered discrimination. Perhaps what is more telling are some of the reasons victims never lodged complaints as reflected below.

“I feared that if I reported the discrimination, the Assignment Editor would consider me insolent and refuse to give me a good recommendation to secure the job on a permanent basis” - **Respondent.**

“I felt if I reported him I was the one to lose my job and would be humiliated in the process socially” - **Respondent.**

“One finds it is not worth it as the perpetrator would continue behaving in the same way even if cautioned by the Editor” - **Respondent.**

“I never lodged a formal complaint because at first I thought he would just change his behaviour after I had shown that I was not interested. I was also afraid of having to be questioned together with men. I felt like he would ruin my career but every opportunity I got I spoke to my colleagues in the industry. Our situations were the same though we were in different newsrooms” - **Respondent.**

“I just felt like it was a waste of time because after all, all the male counterparts are in higher authority and they always brushed such issues aside claiming it was for your own safety” - **Respondent.**

“I was new and felt that making a report would have me labelled as a ‘trouble’ maker” - **Respondent.**

“I was afraid they would not believe me or I would fail during my assessment as I was an intern reporter” - **Respondent.**

“Most often the outcome would be nothing as people always want to shield each other fearing that their dirty work might also be exposed” - **Respondent.**

“In some cases people don't report because they know that there would be no outcome” - **Respondent.**



These sentiments are indicative of an environment where victims fear that making a stand against gender discrimination will have serious negative repercussions for them and also that such efforts will be futile as nothing will be done to address the problem. As such, 76 per cent of the victims have also considered leaving the profession as a result of gender discrimination.

Some have stayed because they need the salary to support themselves and their families, and are struggling to get other jobs as the country's unemployment rate is high. Most have stayed because they have a passion for journalism and they want to make a difference as demonstrated below.

“What made me to stay was the passion for the job. I could not see myself doing any other job besides journalism” - **Respondent.**

“I stayed in the profession because I like telling the world what happens around us and I have a natural calling to journalism” - **Respondent.**

“Yes at one point I told myself that I would just quit but my heart was soar (sic) for the others. I asked myself how many more females have to contain with this and what will become of the younger girls wanting to establish a career in journalism” - **Respondent.**

In light of the fact that 76 per cent of the victims considered quitting their jobs but stayed, one question we thought begged an answer was how they cope. The coping mechanisms highlighted range from drinking alcohol to praying and believing in God for “wisdom and strength to survive in the newsroom.” In addition, in trying cope with gender discrimination, some have had to “develop thick skins” and some have had to “ignore it and concentrate” on their work as articulated below.

“I just developed [a] thick skin” - **Respondent.**

“I had to take up a firm stance and learn to stand my ground in the newsroom and through that attitude I have earned myself the name... [name withheld]” - **Respondent.**

“I just told myself things will be ok” - **Respondent.**

“I sucked it up and moved on knowing my worth” - **Respondent.**

“I just pretended I wasn't noticing and moved on with my work” - **Respondent.**

“At times you end up accepting such discrimination in order to do away with them (sic)” - **Respondent.**

“I tried to ignore and thought it would come to an end but it remained persistent” - **Respondent.**

Apart from “developing thick skins” and “trying to ignore it”, victims of gender discrimination also try to cope with it through confiding in their fellow male colleagues.

The fact that most of those confided in within the workplace are male is probably born of the fact that newsrooms in Zimbabwe are still very much male dominated.³⁹ What is clear though is that although nothing much is done about it, gender discrimination is talked about in newsrooms corridors, among peers.

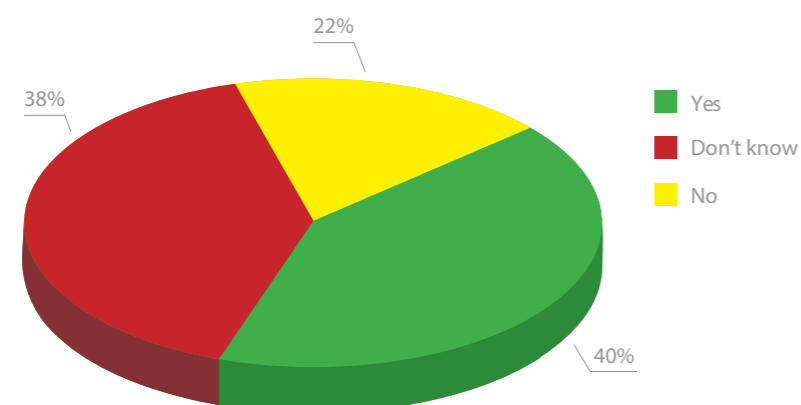
We also found that a relatively large number of those who had fallen prey to gender discrimination practices chose instead to confide in female personal contacts. It is disheartening to note however that none of the coping mechanisms were based on policies or systems put in place by the media houses themselves. Perhaps what needs to be done is to harness the positive coping mechanisms and use them to come up with strategies that will help victims of gender discrimination.

39. See Sikhonzile Ndlovu and Miriam Madziwa, Glass Ceilings. Women and men in Southern Africa media – Zimbabwe (Johannesburg: Gender Links, 2009), <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/glass-ceiling-report-zimbabwe-2009-08-07> (accessed October 6, 2013).

3.9 How effective are gender discrimination policies in Zimbabwean newsrooms?

A media organisation's environment plays an important role in fighting gender discrimination. In addition, its response to gender discrimination has the potential to cause the most damage or foster an environment where gender discrimination is not acceptable. We therefore sought to establish the effectiveness of any current measures that the newsrooms have in place dealing with gender discrimination. We achieved this by first asking media workers if they knew whether their media houses had policies dealing with gender discrimination. The findings are represented below.

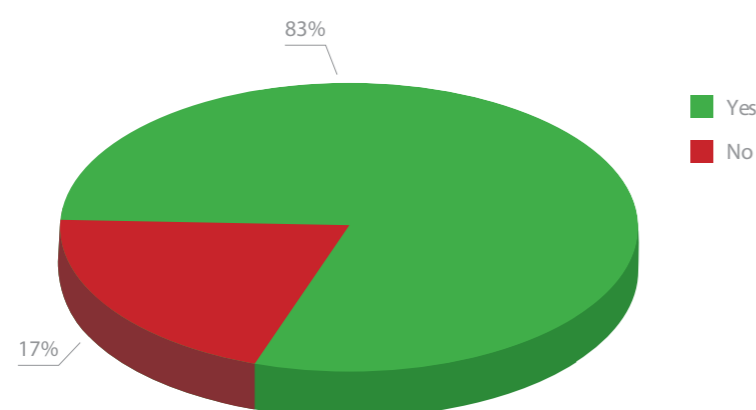
Figure 16: Whether media houses have policies dealing with gender discrimination



That 38 per cent were not sure whether their media houses had policies dealing with gender discrimination indicates that even if the policies are there, the people who are supposed to utilise them cannot do so because they do not even know whether the policies exist or not. Therefore, it could be argued that the media houses where 60 per cent of the respondents came from do not have policies that deal with gender discrimination. It is however a positive indicator that 40 per cent said there were policies especially given that in 2009 none of the Zimbabwean media houses sampled by Ndlovu and Madziwa⁴⁰ had gender policies. This also suggests that there may be something to build on.

We also asked media workers whether they felt that mechanisms for dealing with gender discrimination in their respective media houses were effective or not. Their responses are graphically shown below.

Figure 17: Whether mechanisms for dealing with gender discrimination are effective or not



The majority of media workers indicated that the mechanisms for dealing with gender discrimination in their newsrooms were ineffective. This revelation is hardly surprising as those who specified that they have at some point lodged a complaint⁴¹ felt that their complaints were not properly dealt with, leading to unsatisfactory results. The following reasons highlight why media workers feel that the mechanisms are ineffective.

40. Sikhonzile Ndlovu and Miriam Madziwa, Glass Ceilings. Women and men in Southern Africa media – Zimbabwe (Johannesburg: Gender Links, 2009), 4, <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/glass-ceiling-report-zimbabwe-2009-08-07> (accessed October 6, 2013). | 41. See Figure 15.

"I don't feel that methods/mechanisms of dealing with gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms are effective as there are no policies or guidelines that clearly stipulate what action a person who has been discriminated based on their gender can take to address the situation"

- Respondent.

"I do not think they are effective. There have been many cases of discrimination and abuse of women that have been talked and written about but I have not seen anyone labelled as the perpetrator being dismissed from work" - Respondent.

"They are not effective because very little is being said or done to address the issue. For instance, at some media houses some perpetrators are still walking scot-free regardless of being fingered at (sic) numerous times" - Respondent.

"While most newsrooms have policies or mechanisms to deal with gender discrimination, I think the methods are not very effective. At times it would be difficult for a female subordinate to report her boss who would have discriminated her in any way because of our culture and for fear of victimisation" - Respondent.

"The main problem lies with organisations which have no set policy on gender discrimination. Many newsrooms do not have a reference document and in cases where it exists it has not been availed to the relevant stakeholders and those it seeks to protect. Gender discrimination cases are not talked about openly. It is all hush-hush with as few people as possible involved. This makes it impossible to eradicate gender discrimination. In some cases the perpetrator is just moved from his office to another office so as not to interact with the victim" - Respondent.

"The current mechanisms are not effective because there has not been a tacit admission of discrimination as a problem hence the policy guidelines are more to window dress and be seen to be among the compliant rather than motivated by a genuine concern to deal with a problem. I say so because there are no clear evaluation methods to trace progress and outline strategies of uplifting women and reward systems for those that excel in that endeavour. The mechanisms should show that newsrooms are 'hard-hit' areas for women while being a 'sandals for picnic' affair for men, with policies that are deliberately tilted in favour of the discriminated in terms of training especially so that failure in performance is not immediately associated with gender" - Respondent.

"They are not effective because the problem has been talked about for a long time now, but it still exists. Discrimination is still prevalent meaning that little or nothing is being done to address the problem. Perpetrators are not being exposed because the media practitioners are protecting each other. Victims are sometimes talked into dropping criminal charges because it will tarnish the image of the organisation. Some are convinced that they will not stand a chance of winning their case against this so and so senior journalist as he has made a name; he is respected and prominent member of society. Fear of getting into trouble or being shunned by friends, relatives or lovers/spouses make it difficult for some victims to pursue their cases" - Respondent.

It is clear that media workers feel that if the mechanisms were effective, gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms would be a thing of the past. Instead, it is still haunting the country's newsrooms.

If gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms is still a big problem and the mechanisms for dealing with it are ineffective as clearly articulated above, then the question is; what could be done to reduce gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms? The following section specifically provides answers to that question.

3.10 What could be done to reduce gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms?

Reducing gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms requires a multi-pronged approach. Much of the gender discrimination that occurs stems from the fact that the practice is a societal and cultural problem that then filters into newsrooms, and is then recreated and deepened within many of them. There is therefore a need to bring about societal and cultural shifts in gender relations and hopefully in the long-run the gains from such efforts will filter into newsrooms. One of the ways that gender discrimination can and needs to be combated at societal level is through the creation and implementation of legislation that ensures discrimination is being recorded and dealt with. It is therefore crucial to establish the existence of legislation on gender discrimination as gender discrimination policies will be more effective if they are in line with and have the backing the law.

Zimbabwe's new Constitution,⁴² which is the supreme law of the land and is binding on every person, is littered with provisions that deal with gender equality. It is listed as one of the founding values and principles in Chapter 1. Most importantly, for the purposes of this study is that, the Declaration of Rights in Chapter 4 grants the right to equal treatment to both men and women in all spheres of life as well as the right not to be unfairly discriminated on the basis of gender. In spite of a lack of legislation that is specific to gender discrimination, Zimbabwe's Constitutional protection against discrimination is relatively strong. In addition to the above-mentioned provisions and though legislation is yet to be enacted to incorporate most of them, Zimbabwe is a signatory to a number of regional and international instruments that are against gender discrimination. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This means that Zimbabwe, at the very least, has obligations not to act contrary to these instruments.

As highlighted earlier a significant number of media houses do not have policies that are targeted at gender discrimination yet the significance of such policies cannot be over-emphasised.

Preventing gender discrimination is certainly easier than dealing with the consequences that ensue when it has already taken place. Perhaps what is crucial as a first step is to ensure that all media houses establish clear gender discrimination policies. It is imperative that the policies be clear on key specific issues. For example, the policies need to specify that gender discrimination, in all its manifestations, is unacceptable. Among other things it should also define what constitutes gender discrimination, the proper process to follow when one experiences discrimination and the attendant consequences that one is likely to suffer if found guilty of having breached the policy. As seen above the presence of a proper process is crucial to the response that a victim to gender discrimination takes.

Much as the availability of policies is important, it is however clearly not sufficient in eradicating gender discrimination. The study earlier showed that where gender discrimination policies are in place most respondents felt that they were inadequate or did not even know about them.

Policies will have more impact if media houses take a more proactive role in dealing with the matter.

An integral part to the success of any policy is therefore creating awareness that is sustained over a long period of time. It is only if they are aware of the policies that media workers will be able to enforce their rights not to be discriminated and seek recourse where there have been transgressions. Sustained awareness can be achieved in several ways, such as long-term educational campaigns within the workplace, making training on gender discrimination part of the induction process for new workers, displaying gender policies on notice boards among other things.

Even with the best of policies, it will be impossible to stamp out gender discrimination without commitment and will power particularly by those in positions of authority. Often victims of gender discrimination opt not to take any action for fear that such action will end up having a negative impact on their careers. The cost of lodging a complaint is seen as too high particularly in an economy that is struggling with high levels of unemployment. It is therefore essential that an environment is created in which victims do not fear retaliation. This can be achieved by ensuring that gender discrimination policies are followed through in instances where gender discrimination is alleged. In addition, managers need to be trained on how to deal with complaints effectively with the required tact and sensitivity. Gender issues should therefore be part and parcel of leadership training programmes. This means that strategies of solving the practice are not only left to women but also to men as they predominantly wield power in the newsroom.

Further, where the victim feels that their grievance will not be dealt with adequately for one reason or another, the victim should be able to report to another authority.

Also, support networks could be created among colleagues to encourage information sharing about ways of preventing and dealing with gender discrimination.

42. Constitution of Zimbabwe (Final Draft: 31 January 2013), <http://www.gta.gov.zw/> (accessed, September 20, 2013).

Conclusion

The study has established that root causes of gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms are embedded in patriarchy. These patriarchal values are often reinforced and strengthened by particular religious and other socio-cultural norms and values. As a result, perpetrators are predominantly men who exert their power on women who hold lower positions.

The study also overwhelmingly highlighted that gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms is not only prevalent but also covers the full spectrum of discrimination from stereotypical comments to physical assault. Further, gender discrimination is institutionalised, meaning it has become part and parcel of the daily lives of media workers and it occurs on a daily basis. The research also revealed that use of negative gender stereotypes and sexual harassment are the most common types of gender discrimination prevalent in Zimbabwean newsrooms. In some instances it is so dominant that women have been sexually harassed in front of other colleagues. This further reinforces the institutionalisation and normalisation of gender discrimination. It is also indicative of an environment that fosters discrimination where perpetrators are brazen and clearly believe that they cannot be held accountable for their actions. A direct consequence of such an environment is that victims fear that making a stand against the practice will have serious negative consequences for them and also that such efforts will be futile as nothing will be done to address the problem.

The driving factors behind gender discrimination are clearly far more challenging to combat. This means that solutions to it require innovation and strategic approaches. They require on-going, long-term commitment by various stakeholders who can facilitate a shift in the way men and women relate to each other and are treated, not only on a professional level, but in all other spheres. Among other things this requires not only men's involvement in strategies that seek to eradicate the practice but also strategies targeted at them.

Current mechanisms for dealing with gender discrimination in Zimbabwean newsrooms are clearly inadequate. In order to reduce gender discrimination in the country's newsrooms, three areas could be focused on, namely, the creation of legislation and policies, sustained awareness raising, and creating an environment where both women and men thrive. There is also need to bring about societal and cultural shifts in gender relations and hopefully in the long-run the gains from such efforts will filter into newsrooms.





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