

FEMALE INVOLVEMENT IN SPORTS JOURNALISM IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the involvement of women in Sports Journalism in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study was based on feminist media theory, which is highly relevant to gender equality, inclusivity, and equity, which are the major foci of this research. The survey research design was used, and the questionnaire was the primary research instrument. Of the 297 copies of questionnaire administered, 96.9% were considered usable. Among other findings, the study established that there is a low level of female journalists' participation in sports journalism in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Likewise, the study revealed that female involvement in sports journalism is limited to junior roles, as no female influencers were found as editors in the sports beat of the media organizations that were studied. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that media organizations in Bayelsa State should actively work toward promoting gender diversity in sports journalism by providing equal opportunities for women to ascend to editorial and managerial positions within the sports beats in Bayelsa State.

Keywords: Gender, Journalism, Involvement, Parity, Sports

Introduction

Sports journalism is now considered the most rapidly expanding sector in the global media landscape. In the past, sports news was relegated to the last two or three pages of newspapers or to weekend afternoons on radio and television (Marques, 2021). However, it has since gained immense importance for the success of print and broadcast media (Tijani-Adenle, 2019). Moreover, it has also become increasingly vital for emerging fields within the realm of media practice. This shift is underscored by the fact that sports news now takes centre stage on the front pages of newspapers and contributes substantially to the advertising revenue of newspapers (Usher & Poepsel, 2021).

Ogwuche (2018) asserted that there has been a significant shift in the sports journalism scene, to the point that it is hardly recognizable from its prior position. The job of sports journalism has become much more appealing as

a result of this transformation (Riberio & Bonixe, 2021). Nevertheless, empirical evidence highlights a notable discrepancy, specifically with gender representation in Nigerian sports journalism (Aregbesola & van der Walt, 2023).

The currently available research demonstrates that women are significantly underrepresented in the field of sports journalism, including among those who anchor sports-related programs on radio and television during workdays (Xu, Fan & Brown, 2021). This underrepresentation emphasizes the widespread belief—held not only in Nigeria but also in many other nations as well—that sports writing is still primarily dominated by men (Osinuga, & Ogbonna, 2015; Franks & O'Neil, 2016).

While efforts have been made to narrow the gender gap in sports journalism, this remains a formidable challenge. For instance, Supersports' "Superpicks" show features female hosts and analysts, although they still account for only about 25% of the total correspondents and analysts on the show. Moreover, even in the English Premier League, the most-watched soccer league globally, there is a significant disparity in gender representation, with a scarcity of female commentators, analysts, journalists and correspondents. Consequently, this imbalance has led to limited female involvement in sports, coaching, and leadership roles in the sports industry. Despite the growth of sports journalism and the relationship between media and sports.

However, in the contemporary Nigerian media landscape, there has been an increase in female participation in sports reporting and analysis (Ogwuche, 2021; Gadzekpo, & Smith, 2020). In light of the above, this study seeks to appraise female involvement in sports journalism in Bayelsa State.

Statement of research problems

Empirically, the field of journalism has long been characterized by gender disparities, with sports journalism no exception. Although progress has been made in many professional areas toward gender equality, female journalists still encounter particular difficulties, prejudices, and obstacles when covering sports (Okwuche, et al., 2021). Adebayo, Falase, and Akintunde (2019) further point out that although women's athletic programs have grown significantly in the media over the past few decades, female sports journalists in Nigeria continue to receive little respect and attention.

This situation has created an imbalance between male and female journalists in sports journalism. The possible situation could affect productivity, efficiency, and inclusiveness, which many other professions and governance across the world now enjoy. The scenario makes it imperative to investigate the situation as it relates to Bayelsa State because of the active journalism going on there.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to appraise female involvement in sports journalism in Bayelsa State. Specifically, its objectives include the following:

1. To examine the level of female journalists' involvement in sports reporting in Bayelsa State, Nigeria;
2. To investigate the sports in which female journalists are interested.
3. To determine whether there is equal opportunity exists for both male and female journalists for sports coverage in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are female journalists involved in sports reporting in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?
2. What areas of sports are female journalists interested in?
3. Is there equal opportunity for male and female journalists to cover sports in Bayelsa State?

Conceptual Clarification

Sports Journalism in Nigeria

Jammy Seigha Guanah, Blessing Awayo Joseph and Ebere Chinelo Uchendu (2024)

Sports journalism encompasses the written, reported, or broadcasted coverage of sporting events and topics. The study spans various forms, from play-by-play and game recaps to analytical and investigative pieces on significant developments in the sports world. In Nigeria, despite the country's abundant human and material resources, the full potential of its sports sector is yet to be optimized. Several factors contribute to this situation, including institutional, management, and leadership challenges (Olumuyiwa & Isaiah, 2023; Ikeanyibe, Eze & Okoye, 2017).

Writing about how sports share fundamental principles and techniques with general news reporting, Awonise (2012) asserted that sports journalism, including broadcasting, demands precise, direct, accurate, and timely presentation of information, extending its responsibilities to providing technical insights to sports scouts and managers.

The phenomenal rise of live event coverage has caused a paradigm change, according to Kawonise (2012), with sports departments going from being integrated within news departments to achieving independent status inside broader media networks. The general tendency is toward autonomy, even though smaller media firms might incorporate sports journalism into the news department's jurisdiction. News writers rarely compose sports sections; instead, sports journalists are usually in charge of assembling and producing sports-related content.

Notably, the rise of all-sports cable channels has expanded the landscape of sports journalism, offering live coverage, sports news, interviews, and features, thus transforming the dynamics of sports journalism in the media industry. In certain instances, the media has been criticized for prioritizing foreign sporting institutions and events over indigenous ones.

Sports journalism in Nigeria has faced scrutiny for allegedly leaning more toward covering European sporting events and athletes rather than actively promoting local talent. This raises significant concerns about how sports journalists perceive their place in the growth of national sports (Gennaro & Aderinto, 2019). Nonetheless, there is a long history of notable media contributions to the advancement of sports in Nigeria.

Fabio Lanipekun led a group of Nigerians, including the late Yinka Craig, Hamed Adio, Waheed Olagunju, Rotimi Bisiriyu, Charles Ojugbana, Larry Izamaje, and others, in pioneering sports broadcast journalism in Africa long before Super Sports, the satellite-based sports TV channel, debuted (Osazee-Odia & Nwokoro, 2021). The versatile radio broadcasters, such as Ernest Okonkwo, Ishola Folorunsho, and others, also made indelible contributions. Their soccer commentary captivated audiences, encouraging corporate bodies to invest in sports.

The iconic moments in Nigerian football, including the arduous efforts to qualify for the FIFA World Cup, owe much of their memorability to the incredibly talented broadcasters. These individuals, through their radio exploits, played a pivotal role in inspiring young Nigerians to engage in sports (Kawonise, 2012). Newspapers with extensive sports coverage, such as *The Daily Times*, *the Nigerian Tribune*, *New Nigerian*, and others, have had a significant impact. Sponsors were drawn in by the wide coverage, which was important for raising the money needed for sports growth.

The sports media was a vital watchdog in maintaining ethics and good governance in sports, holding officials responsible and pressuring them to behave in the best interests of the country's sports. Because of this diligence, Nigeria's sports administration was so successful that it became a model for the rest of the continent (Aondover, Oyeleye, & Aliyu, 2023).

A few media outlets in Nigeria have taken active involvement in direct sports development projects. John Momoh's Channels TV has made a direct contribution to sports development, going beyond its typical responsibilities of providing information, education, and entertainment. Every year on Children's Day in Lagos,

Channels TV broadcasts a grassroots soccer competition that gives young players a chance to practice and look forward to this yearly championship. Channels also encourage Down syndrome children to compete in the Special Olympics. In memory of the late Ladi Lawal, Africa Independent Television (AIT) hosted an annual U-17 Championship. This exemplifies a growing trend of media houses contributing to the overall development of sports in Nigeria (Yar'Adua, et al., 2023).

Gendered News Reporting: Exploring the Dynamics of Women's Media Participation and Influence

Apart from the hotly debated issue of women's rights activists as the current gender gap in management and board representation in the financial sector (Guanah, Njoku & Akpoegeberibo, 2024), another area of interest is the issue of female gender-based news reporting. The twenty-first century has witnessed a transformative shift in the presentation of news by journalists and media outlets, prompting a concentrated exploration of the intricate relationship between news language and gender differentiation (Smith & Higgins, 2020). This connection highlights how societal concerns, institutional ideologies, and normative practices shape how news and media reporting that is geared toward women is constructed (Balasubramanian, 2018).

In education and cultural studies, the questioning of gender identity, including self-representations and the placement of gendered issues, has evolved into a recurrent symbolic conflict (Zuiderveld, 2017). In the process of deconstructing ideas of solidarity and binary distinctions that are essential for understanding social diversity and promoting peaceful pluralism in media content across borders, these symbolic struggles serve as mechanisms for the hegemonic production of identity categories and subjectivities within news reporting (Ridgeway, 2013). Gender assigns people to particular genders or places them in the role of gendered subjects (Okon, Ajiboye, Ekanem, & Omojola, 2018). The discourse patterns, decisions, attitudes, and orientations toward portraying social phenomena in news reporting are examples of how this stance is expressed. News reporting entails a social process of narrative formation influenced by established news language, style, and distribution networks, even as news in its many forms narrates current and unexpected occurrences (Hasan, 2016).

Although there has been a global increase in the number of women working in the media, men still hold most positions, such as chief editors, producers, executives, and publishers. This trend is especially noticeable in Africa, where cultural barriers prevent women from performing journalistic duties (Amobi, 2013).

According to North (2016), there is a global shortage of female journalists covering "hard" topics like politics and economics and a greater tendency to assign them "soft" themes like family, lifestyle, fashion, and the arts. Amon (2017) highlighted that the degree of female engagement and influence in the media has a substantial impact on content because women in the media are more likely to represent the needs and viewpoints of other women.

Glass Ceilings in Sports Journalism

Studies have indicated that impediments to female journalists' career advancement are predominantly rooted in gender-related challenges, with societal factors also playing a role. Gender relations in Nigeria and other developing African nations are marked by significant imbalances and inequality, with a prevalent belief that women are not physiologically suited for roles in journalism (Nwosu, Osah, & Chioma, 2015).

Researchers contend that women in Africa find it difficult to live up to the standards required for a thorough engagement with the media profession in that continent (Nwosu, et al, 2015). One noteworthy factor that contributes to the gender gap in journalism is that, in contrast to their peers in other professions, most female journalists begin their careers in entry-level positions.

This approach not only encourages the objectification of the female body but also maintains the gender gap in journalism. Stereotyping of female journalists is common, and they may have difficulties pursuing more difficult

beats like sports journalism, or choosing less demanding career paths. This was emphasized by Hardin and Shain (2006), who cited the Seattle Post-Intelligencer (2005), which stated that in high-circulation newspaper sports departments in 2001, women made up only 13% of media employees, mostly in the clerk, copy editor, and reporter roles (Hardin, 2006). According to recent studies, women constitute only 11% of sports department employees. This highlights the dominance of men in the news media as a barrier that prevents women from advancing in journalism, particularly sports journalism (Schultz, 2018).

Empirical Review

Several studies related to this study have been conducted. A few of these studies were reviewed in this study. A study by Ogwuche (2023) on Discourse on Gender Inequality in Nigerian sports journalism practice sought to explore the root causes of gender disparity among male and female journalists; sought to contribute to the existing discourse by using sociological discourse analysis, gender role theory, and African feminist theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing gender inequality in sports journalism.

The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing an exploratory research method based on secondary data gathered through a comprehensive literature review. The study identified a notable lack of research and a scarcity of women's involvement in sports journalism within the Nigerian context. The study suggests that the limited presence of women in this field can be attributed to both a lack of interest among women and the challenges of gender stereotypes faced by the few women actively engaged in sports journalism in Nigeria.

Another study by Fernandez, (2023) investigated gender stereotypes in the media: A Natural Language Processing approach to understanding gender disparities in the reporting of football found notable differences in the coverage, with a focus on the personal lives of female footballers and the on-pitch performances of male football players. Additionally, the syntactical analysis revealed the use of gendered language more frequently in women's soccer reporting and action-oriented language in men's.

The objectives of the study were to understand how stereotypes in football reporting within the media are perpetuated, and how they have evolved (2002-2020). Using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques, this study specifically analysed articles from *The Guardian's* soccer section to explore semantic and syntactical differences in the coverage of men's and women's soccer.

This study employed a longitudinal approach to track changes in gender representation in soccer reporting over two decades. The proposed model utilized machine learning techniques, including seeded topic modelling and Part of Speech (POS) tag analysis, to examine how the media portray male and female soccer players differently. Another study by Schoch (2020), on *The Gender of Sports News: Horizontal Segregation and Marginalization of Female Journalists in the Swiss Press*, uncovered a distinct horizontal segregation within sports newsrooms, where a significantly higher number of male journalists are allocated coverage of prestigious subjects and produce more technical match reports, often deemed the "hardest" news stories.

In contrast, female journalists tend to be confined to covering less prestigious sports and women's sports and are more frequently assigned "soft" stories. The primary aim of this study was to scrutinize the allocation of sports news coverage among female and male journalists, with a specific focus on identifying horizontal segregation within sports newsrooms. A similar study by O'Neill (2014) entitled *Women Reporting Sport: Still a man's game?* employed a quantitative approach, utilizing a content analysis method to count bylines based on gender in the national UK press and revealed that the proportion of female sports writers in the UK press is lower than in comparable countries but that there has been little improvement over time.

The objectives of the study were to examine the current visibility of female sports journalists by analyzing by-lines according to gender and, second, to investigate whether the 2012 London Olympic Games had any impact on the proportion of female sports writers in the UK press.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses Feminist Theory, as advocated by well-known feminist theorists like Adrienne Rich, Betty Friedan, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and Elaine Showalter, to demonstrate how Nigerian women functioned in a patriarchal environment from pre-colonial to independence. Sex, gender, racism, discrimination, equality, disparities, and choice are among the main topics of feminist thought (Crossman, 2020).

Feminist theory, according to Crossman (2020), has traditionally focused on examining the social environment through a lens that highlights the processes that give rise to and sustain oppression, injustice, and inequality to further the goals of justice and equality.

The study's use of feminist media theory offers a critical lens through which to analyze and comprehend the dynamics of female involvement in sports journalism, particularly in the context of patriarchal settings. Feminist theory can be used to offer insights into the opportunities and obstacles facing women in sports journalism, even though its main focus in this study is on the historical role of Nigerian women in political action and broader societal development.

For instance, the feminist theory's emphasis on gender and discrimination becomes pertinent when examining the challenges faced by female sports journalists. In a patriarchal setting in which traditional gender roles may perpetuate discrimination, this theory illuminates the systemic barriers hindering women's full participation in sports journalism.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a survey method to collect data because it involved gathering participants' opinions through a questionnaire. The study population comprised journalists working in Bayelsa State. According to the National Union of Journalists- NUJ (2023), there are 603 journalists in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, of which 297 are women. Therefore, the total number of female journalists in Bayelsa State, Nigeria formed the basis of the research population.

The Taro Yamane Formula was adopted to obtain the sample size required for this study. The formula of Taro Yamane is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (0.5)^2}$$

Where:

n = Required Sample size

N = number of people in the population

e = allowable error (%)

Substitute Numbers in Formula: $n = 297 / 1 + 297 (0.5)^2$

$n = 170$ (Rounded)

After calculating the sample size by substituting the numbers into the Yamane formula, the number of samples was 170. Therefore, the sample size for this study was 170.

The research instrument used in this study was the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered to male and female journalists in print and electronic media houses in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The questionnaire was designed in a way that all the necessary information regarding the study could be obtained.

The quantitative method of data analysis, specifically descriptive statistics, was adopted, and data were presented in frequency distribution tables. The collected data were broken down into variables and presented in a table according to their categories, the direction of frequencies, and bore out percentages. The IBM SPSS Statistical Package Version 28 was used to input and analyze the data.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The following table illustrates the frequency of administered copies of the questionnaire, the number of valid responses, the number of invalid responses, and their corresponding proportions:

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Items	Count	Percentage
Questionnaire administered	170	100
Usable	164	96.5
Invalid	6	3.5

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 2: Distribution by Age

Age		
Item	Frequency	Percentage
18-24	24	14.5
25-54	58	35.5
Above 55	82	50.0
Total	164	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

The data, as contained in the table above show that 14.5%, falls within the age group of 18-24, while the majority of participants, comprising 35.5%, fall within the age range of 25-54. A substantial percentage, accounting for 50%, is for those whose age bracket falls within 55 years and above.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification

Academic Qualification		
Item	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary School	26	16.1
NCE/OND	58	35.5
HND/BSC	56	33.9
Master's & Others	24	14.5
Total	164	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 3 shows that 16.1% of respondents have attained secondary school level academic qualification, while the largest proportion, accounting for 35.5%, holds academic qualification at the NCE/OND level. Similarly, a substantial percentage, comprising 33.9%, holds Higher National Diploma (HND) or Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) qualifications, as a smaller but notable percentage, 14.5%, holds Master's degrees or other advanced qualifications.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by Beat

Beat		
Item	Frequency	Percentage
Sports	8	4.8
Politics	35	21
Entertainment	29	17.7
News	68	41.9
Business	24	14.5

Total	164	100
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Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 4 shows that a small percentage (4.8%) of respondents cover the sports beat, while a notable proportion (21%, is engaged in political journalism, as 17.7%, is engaged in political journalism. Meanwhile, the majority of respondents (41.9%) are general-news reporters. This is against a smaller but significant percentage (14.5%) that is involved in business journalism.

Table 5: Total Number of female journalists in each sports team win per organization.

sItem	Frequency	Percentage
0	108	66.1
1-5	50	30.6
6-10	6	3.2
Total	164	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 5 shows that the majority (66.1%) of media houses in Bayelsa State lack any female journalist designated for the sports beat. Meanwhile, 30.6% have between one and five female journalists on the sports beat, and a smaller proportion, 3.2%, indicates that between six and ten female journalists are assigned to the sports beat in their respective media houses.

Table 6: Female Journalist’s preference for other sports beats

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	13	8.1
Undecided	24	14.5
Agree	45	27.4
Strongly Agree	82	50
Total	164	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 6 indicates that the majority of female journalists (50%) strongly agree that they prefer other sports beats. An additional 27.4% agreed with the statement, contributing to the overall sentiment that a significant portion of female journalists favors beats beyond sports. This shows that 77% of respondents preferred other sports games over sports.

Table 7: Favorite topics of female journalists in sports segments

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Strategy	5	3.2
Player Interviews	48	29
Health	35	21
Analytics	76	46.8
Total	164	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 7 provides insights into female journalists' preferences for specific topics in sports segments. The results show that 3.2% of female journalists indicated a preference for covering topics related to sports strategy. Moreover, nearly one-third of the respondents (29%) expressed a preference for covering player interviews. Furthermore, a notable portion, representing 21% of female journalists expressed preference for covering health-related topics within sports segments. The majority of respondents (46.8%) expressed a strong preference for covering sports analytics.

Table 8: Female Journalists in Editorial or managerial positions within sports departments.

Item	Frequency	Percentage
0	156	95.2
1–5	8	4.8
Total	164	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 8 underscores a significant gap, with 95.2% of media houses lacking female editors or managers in the sports department. In contrast, a limited number of media houses (4.8%) have between one and five female editors or managers.

Table 9: Equal Opportunity for Employment in Sports Beats

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	50	30.6
Disagree	95	58.1
Undecided	8	4.8
Agree	11	6.5
Strongly Agree	0	0
Total	164	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 9 shows that 30.6% of the respondents expressed a strong disagreement with the notion that equal employment opportunities exist within sports fields. Furthermore, most respondents (58.1%, expressed disagreement with the idea of equal opportunities in employment within sports fields. A small percentage, 4.8%, remained undecided on the issue, and 6.5% agreed that there are equal opportunities in employment within sports fields.

Table 10: Equal Opportunity for Female Journalists to Anchor Sports Shows in Bayelsa, Indonesia

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	48	29
Disagree	76	46.8
Undecided	29	17.7
Agree	11	6.5
Total	164	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 10 indicates that 29% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the notion that there is equal opportunity for female journalists to anchor sports shows in Bayelsa State, whereas the majority of the respondents, (46.8%) expressed disagreement with the idea of equal opportunities for female journalists to anchor sports shows. A notable percentage, 17.7%, remained undecided on the issue, while a small percentage, 6.5%, agreed that there is equal opportunity for female journalists to anchor sports shows in Bayelsa State.

Conclusions

The discussion of the findings in this study is centered around three (3) research questions raised in this study.

The responses given in Tables 4 and 5 were measured to answer the first research question:

Research Question One: What is the level of female journalists' involvement in sport reporting in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

Results indicate that female participation in sports journalism in Bayelsa State is almost non-existent, as found in Table 4, which indicates the total number of female journalists assigned to the sports beat in media houses across Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The findings reveal that a substantial majority (66.1%) of media houses lack any female journalist designated for the sports beat.

This aligns with Romano's (2010) finding that although there are a handful of well-known female sports reporters in Australia, sports journalism remains almost exclusively the domain of male reporters. Although the patriarchal nature of sports media (Antunovic & Whiteside, 2018) is a major factor in male dominance in sports journalism (Silbar, 2021), there are other contributing factors, as found in this study. Specifically, 74.4% of the respondents agreed that women prefer sports to other sports.

The responses given in Tables 6 and 7 were measured to answer the second research question:

Research Question Two: What Sports Areas are Female Journalists Interested In?

The analysis highlighted distinct preferences among female journalists in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, with soccer emerging as the most favored sports category, capturing the interest of 56.5% of respondents. The strong affinity for soccer aligns with the established appeal and extensive media coverage of this sport worldwide (Bernstein & Blain, 2013). Athletics followed closely, attracting 27.4% of the respondents.

The category labeled as "others" encapsulates sports not explicitly outlined in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the study delved into the thematic interests of female sports journalists, revealing a predilection for analytics, with a significant percentage expressing enthusiasm for this aspect. Scholars like Billings et al. (2008) have highlighted the increasing importance of analytics and player-focused narratives in contemporary sports media content, aligning with the preferences identified in this study (Billings et al., 2008).

Notably, participation in the player interviews was another prominent topic of interest. Additionally, it was also discovered that in terms of anchoring sports shows in media across Bayelsa State, Nigeria, there was an unequal participation favoring the male colleagues over female counterparts. The discovery of unequal participation favoring male colleagues in anchoring sports shows resonates with the broader literature on gender inequalities in sports broadcasting. Existing research highlights the persistent gender gap in on-screen roles, with men dominating the anchor positions (Duncan & Messner, 2005).

The responses given in Tables 8 and 9 and 10 were measured to answer the third research question:

Research Question Three: Is there equal opportunity for male and female journalists to cover sports in Bayelsa State?

Results show that there are no female editors in sports departments in various media organizations in Bayelsa State. This agrees with North's (2009) finding that there are no female athletes playing the influential role of sports editor for any of the major newspapers in Australia. This result echoes a global trend of women being underrepresented in editorial positions in sports journalism.

Findings further indicate that there was no equal opportunity for women to be employed in the sports beat as their male colleagues, in the sports field as their male colleagues. While not explicitly referenced, this aligns with broader literature on gender disparities in sports journalism, where systemic barriers often hinder women's entry and progression (Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013).

Conclusion

The study employed feminist media theory because of its suitability for examining gender dynamics in media. A descriptive research survey design was adopted, involving a sample of 164 female journalists working across media stations in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, with the questionnaire serving as the primary data collection tool.

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there has been little or no female journalist participation in sports journalism in Bayelsa State. It can also be concluded that female involvement in sports journalism is limited to junior roles, with virtually no female influencers as editors in the sports world. This result echoes a global trend of women being underrepresented in editorial positions in sports journalism.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Media organizations in Bayelsa should actively work toward promoting gender parity in sports journalism by providing equal opportunities for women to ascend to editorial and managerial positions within the sports beat. This can be achieved through targeted recruitment, mentorship programs, and initiatives to empower female journalists to take on leadership roles.
2. Media organizations should recognize and respond to the preferences of female journalists by diversifying sports coverage to include a broader range of events, categories and topics.

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