



Gate Keeping and the Media: "Keeping Out the Other?" Analysis of a Campus Print Media

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Abstract

Given the increasing number of community media, in Nigerian tertiary institutions, this study interrogates the concept of gate keeping under a gender perspective in a community newspaper. The aim of the study is to determine the level of visibility, prominence and representations given to female related issues in a community newspaper (UNIZIK Comet) as well as the extent of female students' participation therein. The researchers content analyzed all **UNIZIK Comet** productions, comprised of 19 publications, including both newspapers and magazines over a period of 10 years (2003-2012). Findings show that only 112 male students participated in the productions as reporters, against 334 female students out of the total number of 1142 students who entirely produced the magazines and Newspapers. This demonstrates the overriding participation of the female students in the productions as reporters and editors, does not corroborate to gender balance in news content. Contrary to expectations, the voices of women and women related issues remained largely unheard and unseen in the entire publications. It was found that majority of stories that centered on women were features which were all positioned inside pages. The study concludes that emerging community media in Nigeria, just as the traditional media normalizes the structural conditions of exclusion of women and women issues based on mechanisms that are more sophisticated than are learned in the classrooms and by extension perpetuates women marginalization and invisibility.

Keywords: UNIZIK Comet, community media, gate keeping, gender portrayal



Introduction

Gate keeping, an enduring concept of mass communication has been traditionally used to regulate the news flow in the media and set news agenda for the public. From the gate keeping concept, we understand that not all stories no matter how important make it as news. We understand that news stories undergo a systematic selection process that is biased and driven by a combination of factors -news norms, societal values/pressures and organizational factors. In fact, the gate keeping concept exposes the often complex hierarchal influence and domination of news media by a select few- the gatekeepers. According to Soroka (2012), the basic idea of gate keeping has been cogently stated in Shoemaker's valuable review of the literature thus: "Simply put, gate keeping is the process by which the billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day" (2001, p. 3). Thus, a story's success is subject to the decisions of its many gatekeepers who operate at different levels in the process. This "hierarchy of influences" explains "how news gets constructed – by individuals – within a social and occupational setting" (Reese, 2001). The concept of Gate keeping therefore exerts enormous influence in the voices heard and the faces seen in the news media. How these processes of selection (and exclusion) of issues take place and are decided on, and what elements influence them, are questions that have been taken up in this study within the context of community media.

Research evidence indicates that men dominate the gate keeping process in Nigerian mainstream media, resulting in a gendered gate keeping process. Among the reasons for this dominance has been the overwhelming number of men in news media operations in the country, both as reporters, the first gatekeepers, editors and finally as publishers, the final gatekeepers. These details suggest a significant relationship between gender status in the news room and the hierarchy of influence in the gate keeping process. However, most research, on gate keeping process has focused mainly on traditional media, with few, if any attention on community media. Since community media exist in Nigeria mostly as campus community newspapers and campus community radio stations, this study examines the gate keeping process of a community newspaper.



We appraise the gate keeping context from a gender perspective, to understand how journalists negotiate gate keeping when the news gates have become more fluid and democratic and consider how community newspaper editors reason through this process. Community newspapers have always operated from the participatory media approach. Participatory communication initiative underlies and distinguishes community media practice globally. Participatory media allow for diverse voices, including those of women, to engage with channels of media communication to make their priorities and issues heard. Community media such as community newspapers and community radio stations as argued by scholars, perceive women as producers and contributors of media content and not just as consumers thus challenging gendered structures prevalent in traditional media. They also encourage greater involvement of women in technical, decision making, and agenda-setting activities and have the potential to promote a balanced and non stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

Considering the participatory nature of campus community newspapers, we argue that gender status in these community news media will be more balanced and exert a considerable somehow gender positive influence in news selection process and agenda setting that will result in a democratic reflection of the diverse interest of men and women in these local community. Bearing this in mind, we appraise the gender status of gatekeepers in campus community newspaper, using UNIZIK COMET as a case study to determine how it affects and influence the selection of news content?

Unizik Comet: A Brief Overview

One of the key requirements for students' graduation in their B.Sc degree programmes in the department of Mass Communication of Nnamdi Azikiwe University as previously mentioned is the production of a departmental training newspaper and magazine. As a training news media outfit owned, controlled and financed by the department, the UNIZIK COMET departmental training print media by this characteristic qualifies as a community media. A community media by definition is a media that is owned, produced and controlled by the community (White, 2005). In Nigeria, the Federal government has encouraged the use of campus media both as a platform for student apprenticeship in media training and as a small fully fledged community based media.

UNIZIK COMET therefore, creates a platform where students acquire the practical knowledge of journalism as they hunt for news, adverts, conduct interviews and write various forms of journalistic articles and as well as serve as the campus print news media. Participation in the production of the UNIZIK COMET allows students to familiarize themselves with the practical aspect of journalism practice prior to graduation, thus, the possibility exist that what they practice could be internalized as a journalistic norm. Students get appointed to various key editorial positions and work in collaboration with staff editors including the head of the department who is often regarded as the publisher and the final gatekeeper. It is noteworthy to point out that for the past 10 years or more, a female academic staff has consistently been the Head of the department for Mass Communication. Statics from the department, illustrates that the total number of students for the period of study which was from 2003-2012(10yrs) was 1142. Out of the 1142 students, 792 were females while 350 were males. This demonstrates that over the years, there have been more female students in Mass Communication discipline, than males (see **Appendix 1**). The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) reports that throughout the world, female journalists are more likely to be assigned ‘soft’ subjects such as family, lifestyle, fashion and arts. The ‘hard’ news, politics and the economy, is much less likely to be written or covered by women. Some scholars also argue that stories by female reporters are more likely to challenge stereotypes than those filed by male reporters (Gallagher et al., 2010). These suggestions point to a possible link between the participation of women in the media and improvements in the representation of women. In consideration of the above, this study explores the pattern of news coverage in UNIZIK COMET and the extent gender status in news media influence the news selection process and final content.

Research Questions

This study's focus is to discover the level and nature of coverage, visibility and representations given to female related issues in a campus print media as well as the extent of female students’ participation in these media. Using the available UNIZIK COMET publications, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the extent of female students’ reflection in the editorial boards of UNIZIK COMET?
2. What is the extent of female student’s representation as journalists in the newspaper?



3. What is the level of prominence, visibility and representations given to female issues?

A Review of Literature and Theory

This work subscribes to Gate keeping theory which holds that media “gatekeepers” regulate the flow of information being channeled to receivers. Coined by Kurt Lewin, “gate keeping” refers to the process whereby a vast array of potential news messages are winnowed, shaped, and prodded into those few that are actually transmitted by the news media” (Shoemaker, 2001), and more broadly, the process of “selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating and otherwise massaging information to become news” (Shoemaker, Vox & Reese, 2008, p. 73). Gate keeping activities, may therefore engross the selection, disregard, or outright deletion of information which scholars have acknowledged to be highly subjective given that stories selection is chiefly guided by the gate keepers’ individual tastes, gender and preferences, with minimal attention on the professional, organizational, technological, and cultural influences. As gatekeepers act as the mediators, determining which information is deemed important and worthy of transforming into a public message, they invariably contribute to the audience constructions of social reality and their personal world view (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 1). Little wonder, Bittner (1992, p. 12) aptly captures the gate keeper as any person or formerly organized group, directly involved in relaying, and transferring information from one individual to another through a mass medium.

Although gate keeping earlier studies presume news selection to be chiefly guided by an expert assessment of what would interest the audiences (McQuails, 2010, p. 311), it has been observed over time, that journalists’ personal ethical judgments predominate their selections and decisions of news salience, thereby subjecting receivers to attach relevance to and converse the issues granted access to pass through their gates. Lewin held that items have “forces” which either facilitate or constrain their passage through the process (Lewin 1950). These forces (newsworthiness, trustworthiness, etc.) can be positive or negative and may vary in intensity two major concepts appear dominant in the process; the “gate keepers” and the “media”. This is because the media directly or indirectly using the gate keepers, communicate messages of both sexes with varied supportive unrealistic and limiting perceptions.... (Wood, 1994, p. 1) Hence, among the



major influences on the level of importance and recognitions societies attach to both men and women, the media has been identified as the most pervasive and one of the most powerful because they insinuate their messages into people's consciousness throughout their daily lives (Hermes, 2007, p. 191). Perhaps, "we need to understand how the media represent gender because construction of femininity and masculinity is part of a dominant ideology" (p. 191)

Traditionally in UNIZIK Comet productions, while student journalists file in reports, student editors, elected by the graduating class, alongside the head of department with some other academic staff editors, act as the gate keepers who filter and decide what is finally deemed newsworthy and gets published. In the process, while certain issues get admitted into the production, some others are constrained. Hence, the Gate keeping theory succinctly provides the suitable framework for examining the level of prominence, visibility and representations given to female related issues in 'UNIZIK Comet', - which qualifies as a fully fledged community media, where 'popular and active audience participation' should be the catchword towards encouraging the voice of the minority and the voiceless in every community.

Review of Empirical Studies

In 1950, 'David Manning White' first applied the concept of gate keeping in the field of journalism, when he examined how subjective judgments influenced editorial decisions of a wire editor but found that news stories have "forces" which either facilitate or constrain their passages. These forces (newsworthiness, trustworthiness, etc.) can either be positive or negative though varies in intensity but the stories the wire services released in each category of news influenced the editor. Although White insisted that certain factors determine the stories' access through the gates, he acknowledged the power of individual gatekeepers in their selections. To further illustrate this, he aptly used his "theory of channels and gatekeepers" to succinctly explain how food items pass through certain "channels" before ending up on the dinner table.

Contrary to these, in Gebner's study in 1956, less attention was paid to the individual gatekeepers but more on the governing norms and routines of news production. He studied 16 telegraph editors but found that their personal preferences and decisions about events and people in the news had no



effect on their selection of news, thus aligning with Westley & MacLean's gate keeping approach in 1957 - In addition to parties A and B passing information through channels, they created C as an intermediary and as a gate keeping position.

Similarly, Breed in 1956 established that the publisher's news policy sets the agenda for which stories would get published while social forces created by "the more or less consistent orientations shown by a paper" serve as gatekeepers in their own right. Perhaps, news is subjective to the gatekeeper (Gieber, 1964) while editors are detached and objective professionals" (Adhikari, Everbach, & Fahmy, 2002). These therefore demonstrate that the relationship between the audience interests and editorial judgments to issues have diverse and wide disparities, given that the scholars show diverse conflicting opinions towards the concept. Two major sides appear manifest in these arguments; while most scholars argue that gate keeping is purely based on gatekeepers' preferences, some recognized the norms, policies and routines of news production. Basically, the individual forces are characterized, in their most basic form, as the gate keeper's subjective decisions while routine forces include the roles of other media workers, media routines, media organizations, external pressures, and ideologies (Shoemaker, 1996). Hence, 'News judgment' and 'selection' on the other hand are purely based on the professional, organizational, technological, and cultural influences, which either stem from the individual or routine forces (McCombs, 1979 in Shoemaker, 2001).

Across studies of newspapers, traditional news values tend to be frequently mentioned as reasons for selections or rejections of news releases whereas they are generally sent to at least two gatekeepers to make the final decision (Abbott, 1980). Traditionally, Newsgathering typically is left up to "staffers" (reporters) whose attitudes and interests are often more liberal than the "executives" or the "editors" (Breed, 1950). Therefore, practicing reporters must recognize the policies and house styles of the news organization as well as the editor's tastes in order to get their stories published. It is instructive to note that in early studies of media gate keeping (Gieber, 1956; White, 1950), scholarly interests were mainly focused on items that failed to gain entrance into and the reasons behind their exclusions. Stempel (1985) further illustrated that when stories are divided into broad subject categories, such as politics and government, crime, and general human



interest newspapers, television stations select approximately equal mixes of the types, though they vary widely in which stories to be selected.

Although most scholars (Rosentiel & Kovach, 1999; Solomon & Schrum, 2007) discuss ‘gate keeping’ in view of the mainstream or conventional media, there are recent concerns over the concept as it applies online. Singer (2001) using online newspapers established that the internet, defies the whole notion of a ‘gate’ therefore challenging the earlier held notion that journalists exclusively limit what passes through the media, insisting that, “the power of gatekeepers seemed to diminish in a modern information society. Scholarly concerns to the online shift seemed to stoutly point at the potential changes in media agenda setting where gatekeepers’ decisions get prejudiced by the audience but Williams & DelliCarpini (2004, p. 120) dauntingly herald the “collapse of gate keeping”, insisting that “mainstream journalism had lost its position as the central gatekeeper...” They persistently argue that gate keepers in mainstream media, no longer absolutely control and determine the selection of stories due to the flood of related stories co produced by the audience, through the new media.

Several other scholars had overtime questioned the viability of the concept of gate keeping in this era of the new media because of the influences of the internet with its vast quantity of information available from several sources, but many insist that journalists’ gate keeping role is not dying but evolving (Blake, 2004; Cassidy, 2002; Singer, 2001, 2005). These past studies suggest that as long as journalists still select some media content and reject others, they still retain the gate keeping role, irrespective of availability of other media choices for the audience, based on their selective exposure. Singer (2001), while studying the correlation between both print and online gate keeping effects, still found that despite the unlimited news available online, editors shape the print package for online distribution, persisting that online stories were typically identical or had minor changes with the print versions. Hence, despite the widespread contention that “Internet blows open the whole notion of a ‘gate’, Singer uphold that since journalists give credibility to online stories, they still retain a gate keeping role.

As a result, the supposed receivers of media contents had overtime not only redefined the concept of traditional gate keeping by becoming active receivers and co producers of messages, but have as well redefined the very nature of the audience, thereby obscuring the measure and prediction of who constitute the target audiences, given the global influence of the Internet. Although increased audience interactivity has introduced a new stage in the process, whereby audience members participate as secondary gatekeepers on the Internet (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 7), traditional gate keepers still operate online, especially with the online versions of the conventional or mainstream media. Despite this shift, recent scholars still uphold that traditional gate keeping is indispensable in media organizations (Keen, 2008), with much recent studies showing that a journalist's self-perception as the gatekeeper is deeply entrenched, demonstrating that news is what the gatekeepers say it is (Reese, 2001; Singer, 1998).

Although scholarly attention was originally centered on the systematic influences on 'selections' considered as either 'organizational' or 'ideological'. There had been much recent debates questioning the subjective news selection decisions and the autonomy of the news editor. Perhaps, evidence abound where the media close their gates against women voices, in reflection of the societal male hegemony. This had been apparent in various studies challenging the women's high level invisibility in the media in total manifestation of their subjugation and lopsidedness by the society where they are not reckoned with but are rather consistently being regarded as mere appendages to their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers. Often, women are usually given in the media, not as newsmakers but stereotyped in both domestic and decorative roles, as 'wives', 'mothers', 'models', 'cooks', 'domestic helps' 'care givers' 'scheming', 'vicious' and 'morally depraved' who, would stop at nothing to obtain their selfish and material desires (Amobi, n.d.).

In view of these, the media had been accused overtime to out rightly subjugate and silence the women's voices, overtly portraying them as "mere objects of sex, and only fit for advertising models" (Ukozor, 2004, p. 4). However, among studies concerning gate keeping theory, few of such studies have examined the concept in relation to participatory media format of community media. This paucity informs this study as a contribution to gender and participatory communication. Since a wide distinction exists between community media and traditional media

formats in terms of audience participation and inclusion in media practice, how does this detail in the news selection process? This wholly informs the bases upon which the researchers examine the extent at which feminine voices and the female related issues, under severe scrutiny of the community media, as the UNIZIK Comet. Community media unlike other media typologies serve a particular local community and as such are more inclusive in agenda setting function and in priming issues that are of interest for the particular local community. Given the very nature of UNIZIK Comet newspaper we assume that it will be dominated by female gate keepers. How then do these female gatekeepers either permit or constrain the voices of the women in their productions. Does the classroom as part of the ideological state apparatus reinforce already existing gender discrimination in the society or does it portend an arena outside of the state where ideologies are learned and altered?

Methodology

The study addresses the prominence, visibility, representations and gender status of women in UNIZIK Comet newspapers and magazines, produced since inception. It is purely a content analysis of all the UNIZIK Comet publications, which constitute the study population. Since some past editions are no longer accessible, the researchers analyzed all editions still available at the departmental library during the period of study, comprising of Nineteen (19) publications (10 magazines and 9 newspaper editions). The approach, ‘Content analysis’, as identified by Traudt (2005, p. 49), is ‘the systematic observation of elements in print, electronic, cinematic, and other media, usually by documenting the frequency with which such elements appear.’ While Nwodu (2006, p. 81) view it as an objective and systematic analysis of the contents of any document that are manifest; Palmquist (1993, p. 1) insists that content analysis as a research method “... examines words within a wide range of texts, including books, book chapters, essays, interviews, and speeches as well as informal conversations and headlines...” Content analysis is specifically chosen due to the nature of data to be analyzed, manifest content of UNIZIK Comet publications over the years.



Units of Analysis (Data Items)

The unit of analysis is news stories, while the content categories include; the frequency of portrayal, number of bylines and nature of stories covered by female students including representations given to women issues in UNIZIK comet newspapers and magazines productions.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of Nineteen (19) publications of UNIZIK Comet were studied, which comprised ten (10) magazines with nine (9) newspapers, representing the overall number of both magazines and newspapers, accessible at the departmental library, during the period of study. The study time frame was from 2003-2012, covering a decade. Below is the presentation of data and analysis.

Table 1. Gender of Journalists in Magazine

	2003 Magazine	2004 Magazine	2005 Magazine	2006 Magazine	2007 Magazine	2008 Magazine	2009 Magazine	2010 Magazine	2011 Magazine	2012 Magazine	Total
Male	2 (11%)	11 (42%)	15 (22%)	12 (46%)	9 (23%)	15 (29%)	3 (7%)	18 (22%)	6 (40%)	21 (33%)	112 (25%)
Female	17 (89%)	30 (58%)	53 (78%)	14 (54%)	30 (77%)	36 (71%)	39 (93%)	63 (78%)	9 (60%)	43 (67%)	334 (75%)
TOTAL	19 (100%)	41 (100%)	68 (100%)	26 (100%)	39 (100%)	51 (100%)	42 (100%)	81 (100%)	15 (100%)	64 (100%)	446

The data as presented in **Table 1** above, shows the total number of students whose stories appeared in the magazines during the study period. As illustrated, the total number of male students that participated in the magazine production was 25% of the participating students against their female colleagues that represent an overwhelming 75% of the participating student.

Table 2. Gender of Journalists in Newspapers

	2004 Newspaper	2005 Newspaper	2006 Newspaper	2007 Newspaper	2008 Newspaper	2009 Newspaper	2010 Newspaper	2011 Newspaper	2012 Newspaper	TOTAL
Male	19 (43%)	18 (39%)	1 (17%)	16 (38%)	9 (15%)	17 (29%)	22 (44%)	16 (33%)	4 (20%)	122 (33%)
Female	25 (57%)	28 (61%)	5 (83%)	26 (62%)	52 (85%)	41 (71%)	28 (56%)	32 (67%)	16 (80%)	253 (67%)
TOTAL	44 (100%)	46 (100%)	6 (100%)	42 (100%)	61 (100%)	58 (100%)	50 (100%)	48 (100%)	20 (100%)	375

Table 2, similarly demonstrates the gender disparity in the number of students' participation as reporters in the production of magazine .When compared with their male colleagues in terms of those who participated as reporters covering different beats in the entire newspapers' production,

female students participation was 67%, while male participation was 33%. This further corroborates earlier findings from the previous table regarding female dominance in the news selection process, as reporters, the first gatekeepers. Data result from both tables therefore, point towards a high level participation of female students in the entire newspaper and magazine productions. This suggests a very high representation of female students’ participation in the entire UNIZIKCOMET, during the period of study as reporting journalists. This is in sharp contrast to what obtains in the traditional media where gender status in news room according to research (see, GMMP, 2010) is in favour of men and men dominate in news room as reporters. However this might not be unconnected with the gender status of students reading mass communication. As was shown from data in the department for a period of ten years, majority of the undergraduate students were female.

Table 3. Female students’ bylines in the magazines

	2003 Magazine	2004 Magazine	2005 Magazine	2006 Magazine	2007 Magazine	2008 Magazine	2009 Magazine	2010 Magazine	2011 Magazine	2012 Magazine	Total
Male	10 (27%)	21 (34%)	25 (28%)	17 (47%)	19 (32%)	20 (33%)	13 (21%)	18 (22%)	16 (46%)	26 (33%)	193 (32%)
Female	27 (73%)	40 (66%)	63 (72%)	19 (53%)	40 (68%)	41 (67%)	49 (79%)	63 (73%)	19 (54%)	48 (67%)	409 (68%)
Total	37 (100%)	61 (100%)	88 (100%)	36 (100%)	59 (100%)	61 (100%)	62 (100%)	81 (100%)	35 (100%)	74 (100%)	602

The data as presented above, illustrate that out of a sum of 602 by lines in all the magazine editions studied, female students bylines was 409 (68%) that is, two thirds of the entire story bylines were from female students. While their male counterparts had only 193(32%). This demonstrates, that majority of the stories written in the magazine and issues covered were done by female students more than their male counterparts.

Table 4. Female students’ bylines in the newspapers

	2004 Newspaper	2005 Newspaper	2006 Newspaper	2007 Newspaper	2008 Newspaper	2009 Newspaper	2010 Newspaper	2011 Newspaper	2012 Newspaper	Total
Male	29 (45%)	28 (42%)	11 (44%)	26 (42%)	19 (27%)	27 (35%)	32 (47%)	26 (38%)	14 (35%)	212 (38%)
Female	35 (55%)	38 (68%)	14 (56%)	36 (58%)	62 (73%)	51 (65%)	38 (53%)	42 (62%)	26 (65%)	342 (63%)
Total	64 (100%)	66 (100%)	25 (100%)	62 (100%)	71 (100%)	78 (100%)	68 (100%)	68 (100%)	40 (100%)	554

Similar results from the magazine bylines reoccurred in the newspaper, given that in all the newspaper editions studied, female students' bylines remained overriding at 63% against that of the male students at merely 38%. The implication is that female students' bylines in both the newspaper and magazine productions were dominant when compared with that of the male students. The question that therefore clamours for answer is what these female students keep writing. This also raises concern regarding the notion that gender status in the newsroom affects news coverage. Interestingly, from 2003 to 2012, the total numbers of the Magazine Editorial board members representing the final gate keepers and the decision making cadre of these print productions were 179 students across board as was evident from these publications. Out of these board members female students dominated at 54%, representing a total number of 97 students while the male students recorded only 46%, also representing a total number of 82 students. Similar result generated from the Magazine, was also witnessed in the newspaper from 2004 to 2012, female students were leading in the editorial boards, with 56%, representing a total of 78 students against 44% for their male counterparts, also representing a total number of 62 students. Although, the gender status in the editorial boards shows a near parity, female students were still in majority. What the statics above suggest is that across the hierarchy of decision making in selecting and determining which stories and subjects gain entrance and clearance at different points in this community newspaper, female students were in the majority. Overall, gender status across the news room at all levels from the reporters to the highest hierarchy in the decision making in the news process were female dominated for the 10 years of study.

Table 5. Women Visibility in the Magazines

Year	Total stories covered	Total Issues centered on women	Story type	Number of each story type
2003 Magazine Production	Thirty one (N=31)	4 (19%)	Feature stories	(N=4)
2004 Magazine Production	Thirty three (N=33)	1 (5%)	Feature	(N=1)
2005 Magazine Production	Forty nine (N=49)	Nil	-	-
2006 Magazine Production	Forty Four (N=44)	Nil	-	-
2007 Magazine Production	Forty five (N=45)	4 (19%)	News Feature	(N=1) (N=3)
2008 Magazine Production	Thirty five (N=35)	2 (10%)	Feature	(N=2)
2009 Magazine Production	Twenty eight (N=28)	2 (10%)	Feature	(N=2)
2010 Magazine Production	Forty (N=40)	4 (19%)	News Feature	(N=1) (N=3)
2011 Magazine Production	Forty six (N=46)	1 (5%)	Feature	(N=1)
2012 Magazine Production	Fifty two (N=52)	3 (14%)	Feature Film review	(N=2) (N=1)
TOTAL	(N=403)	(n=21) (100%)		(N=21)

Source: UNIZIK COMET Magazines

Above is the tabular presentation showing the level of coverage and visibility given to female related issues in the entire magazines studied. This result and the subsequent one from the newspaper show what these reporters who were majorly female reporters were writing on. As presented, out of 403 issues covered in the magazines, only twenty one (21) centered on women, precisely comprising eighteen (18) features, one review with two (2) news stories. In terms of salience, all stories on women were positioned inside pages with only ten (10) of them up to and above ten column inches while the others were below. Findings further demonstrate that while only nine (9) of women issues were related to empowerments of the women; two (2) were basically gender sensitive, with the (10) others both gender biased and stereotyped; such stories as - *‘Provocative Dressing among our Girls’ ‘Abortion is bad’ ‘Campus Prostitution’ ‘Indecent dressing among youths’ ‘Preparing Women for Marriage’ ‘Campus Marriage’ ‘Runs Girls Syndrome in UNIZIK: the new trade for uptown girls’* and a film review *‘Dumebi- the dirty girl.*

Table 6. Women Visibility in the newspapers

Year	Total stories covered	Total Issues centered on women	Story type	Total of each story type
2004 Newspaper Production	Thirty six (N=36)	Nil	-	-
2005 Newspaper Production	Forty three (N=43)	Nil	-	-
2006 Newspaper Production	Thirty two (N=32)	2 (33%)	News Feature	(N=1) (N=1)
2007 Newspaper Production	Fifty five (N=55)	Nil	-	-
2008 Newspaper Production	Thirty five (N=35)	2 (33%)	Feature	(N=2)
2009 Newspaper Production	Forty eight (N=48)	1 (17%)	News	(N=1)
2010 Newspaper Production	Twenty one (N=21)	Nil	-	-
2011 Newspaper Production	Forty six (N=46)	1 (17%)	News	(N=1)
2012 Newspaper Production	Fifteen (N=15)	Nil	-	-
TOTAL	(N=331)	(N=6) (100%)		(N=6)

Source: UNIZIK COMET Newspapers

From this table, it also appears that what we had in the newspaper was also repeated in the magazine edition, given that out of the overall 331 issues covered in the entire newspaper editions, only 6 issues were about women, comprised of three (3) feature stories, and three news stories for a period of nine years. This is amazing since majority of these stories were written by female students. Based on prominence, stories on women were all positioned inside pages with four (4) of them up to and above ten (10) column inches while two others were below. Whereas five of the stories were purely centered on empowerments of the women; one was both gender biased, - the story *‘Child Prostitution’* written by the 2008 newspaper production class.

Discussion of Findings

A critical analysis of the results from the study yields the following:

First, the data demonstrate that majority of Mass communication students were female. Out of the entire 1142 students whose newspaper and magazine productions were analyzed, 69% were females while 31% were males. Further, the gender status in the news room was skewed in favor



of the female students, since majority of the students reporters in the magazine were female (75%) while the male students were in the minority with just (25%) which is analogous with findings from the newspapers, where the females remained dominant at 67%; altogether pointing towards their high level participation in both the entire newspaper and magazine productions, as reporters, over the years. The findings further reveal that out of the 602 bylines in all the magazines, female students accounted for 68%, whereas the males accounted for 32%. This reoccurred in the newspaper where female students' bylines were as well overriding at 63%. This therefore implies that the female students reported stories more than their male counterparts, given their greater quantity of bylines in both the newspaper and magazine productions. Similarly, female students altogether demonstrate an overriding dominance in decision making, leading in the editorial board membership of both the magazine and newspaper productions. In contrast to the dominance in the news room and news coverage women remained invisible as news subjects and silent in the public sphere where issues were discussed. Hence, out of the 403 issues covered on the whole magazines, only twenty one (21) were centered on women, exactly comprised of eighteen (18) features, one review and two (2) news stories, all positioned inside pages with only ten (10) of them up to and above ten column inches while the others were below. Similar result was also documented in the newspaper. For out of the entire issues covered in the whole newspaper editions, only six (6) were centered on women, comprised of three (3) feature stories, with three (3) news stories, all positioned inside pages with only four (4) of them up to and above ten (10) column inches. While five of the newspaper stories were centered on empowerments of the women; only one was gender biased - *'Child Prostitution'* written by the 2008 newspaper production class. Other Stories centered on empowerments of the women comprised: *'Women leaders to meet in Abuja: attend international conference; Women Empowerment; The excruciating pains of female circumcision; KIND empowers Young Women to empower Nigeria; And Gender War: Gender Equality: Still a Ruse?'* These findings correlate earlier findings on gender representations in the media which continues to validate women's marginalization and underrepresentation in the media.

Findings from this study raise issues of concern and reassessment of some views regarding gender and representations in the media. Prevalent notions from studies in this regard, seem to argue that



the inclusion of more women in the news room will result in gender balance in the news content or rather more inclusion of women stories in news coverage and that the level of participation and influence of women in the media also has implications for media content: female media professionals are more likely to reflect other women's needs and perspectives than their male colleagues, findings from this study challenge this assumption. Rather, it supports the finding from Hanitzsch and Hanusch (2012), which suggests that men's and women's opinions and attitudes towards their jobs do not differ significantly by gender and the lack of difference in gender means that newsroom culture will not necessarily change if more female journalists are employed, as the professional culture is maintained by both sexes. They do note that the reason for similarities may be that female journalists are forced to adopt male values and are judged by male standards.

This therefore, substantiates the idea that faces seen and voices heard in news media content are determined beyond the forces that operate within gender status in the news room, but echo the dominant hegemonic ideology in the society that privileges men over women. This is corroborated by the framing theory which explains that, several factors exist that influence professionals when they produce news and present it according to a given framework or approach. These include their personal experiences, their orientation (ideological, political or religious), journalistic routines, the parameters and measures of the media organization, and even the format in which the news is presented.

Conclusion

What are the implications of these findings when combined with current understandings of gender and media more broadly? Simple, media representations continue to reinforce dominant ideologies in the society concerning men and women. The Nigerian society for example repose women in the private domain while men participate in the public domain, which played out in this research. This demonstrates that what is learned in the classrooms merely revolves and is influenced by the fabrics of dominant societal beliefs and values. In spite of the exciting number of female gate keepers in UNIZIK Comet, given the very nature of the production as a fully fledged community media, where the marginalized voices should be promoted, this study demonstrates that unequal gender gap still exist within the community media terrain. The possibility exist that this is so because

community media is still an emerging concept in the Nigerian media environment and as such yet to develop appropriate model of operations, and therefore leans on existing model as practiced by the mainstream media. The study also suggests that gender status in the news room does not necessarily exert enormous influence in the gate keeping process and news content rather a combination of complex interfacing variables within the society and news media organization influence and shape the final content. The study subtly implies that classroom can be seen as one of the states institutions that serve to maintain and perpetuate dominant societal values and norms. Journalists and media outlets always operate in a given social, political and economic context that affects their interpretation of reality and the filters used to select what is news, which continues to exclude the "other". From the study, the need to incorporate gender discourse as part of the curriculum in tertiary institutions of studies in Nigeria becomes imperative. Further, as community media gradually evolve to become part of the media terrain in the country, measures and policies that are gender sensitive should become part of the operational framework.



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Appendix 1

Table 1. Total number of students of Mass communication for a decade

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Male	45 (45.92)	32 (34.04)	46 (35.94)	33 (33)	46 (47.42)	15 (20)	29 (16.86)	30 (26.09)	42 (28.57)	32 (27.59)	350 (30.65)
Female	53 (54.08)	62 (65.96)	82 (64.06)	67 (67)	51 (52.58)	60 (80)	143 (83.14)	85 (73.91)	105 (71.43)	84 (72.41)	792 (69.35)
Total	98 (100)	94 (100)	128 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	75 (100)	172 (100)	115 (100)	147 (100)	116 (100)	1142