



AWiM Report 2024

Confronting the Hidden Crisis in
Media: Violence Against Women
and Girls in Nigerian Media

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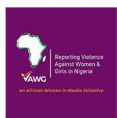


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1.0 Introduction

In recent years, the global conversation around gender equality has intensified, with increasing attention on the pervasive violence against women and girls (VAWG) in various sectors, including the media. Despite significant strides in policy development and advocacy, the media sector in Nigeria remains a challenging environment for women, who continue to face substantial threats both offline and online. The intersection of gender discrimination and professional hazards creates a complex landscape where female journalists and media professionals are particularly vulnerable. This context sets the stage for the pressing need to address VAWG within Nigeria's media industry, a sector that plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and societal norms.

The Nigerian media landscape is characterised by rapid digital transformation, an expanding reach, and diverse platforms that amplify voices nationwide. However, this same landscape also exposes women to heightened risks of harassment, abuse, and violence, particularly in online spaces. The prevalence of online harassment against female journalists, coupled with the lack of adequate institutional support, legal protections, and comprehensive safety protocols, has exacerbated the vulnerabilities of women in this sector. The media, which should serve as a beacon of information and a platform for social change, instead often mirrors and perpetuates the broader societal issues of gender-based violence and discrimination.

This report delves into these critical issues, comprehensively examining VAWG within Nigeria's media sector. The report illuminates the significant gaps in awareness, implementation, and enforcement of policies designed to combat VAWG through extensive survey data and key informant interviews with media professionals across the country. The findings reveal that while existing policy frameworks are intended to protect women in media, these policies are often poorly implemented, inconsistently enforced, and inadequately supported by institutional mechanisms. The analysis highlights the widespread issue of online harassment, with many female journalists reporting a lack of sufficient institutional backing to address these threats effectively. Moreover, the report identifies structural weaknesses within media organisations, such as the absence of gender-sensitive policies and the failure to establish comprehensive safety protocols, further compounding the problem.

The data analysis presented in this report underscores the need for urgent reforms and targeted





interventions. It calls attention to the systemic challenges that hinder progress, including inconsistent policy compliance and limited awareness of institutional structures designed to protect women in media. The ineffectiveness of current strategies to mitigate online threats is a critical concern as digital platforms increasingly become arenas of harassment and violence against female media professionals. In response to these challenges, the report advocates for developing holistic and inclusive policies that address the unique vulnerabilities women face in the media sector. It emphasises the importance of enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, including government bodies, media organisations, civil society, and international partners, to ensure that policy frameworks are comprehensive but also actionable and enforceable. The report also highlights the critical need for public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives aimed at promoting gender equity and fostering a safer media environment.

Ultimately, this report serves as a clarion call to address the deep-rooted issues of VAWG within Nigeria's media sector. By shedding light on the structural, institutional, and cultural barriers that perpetuate violence and discrimination, it aims to foster a media landscape where gender equity is realised and the rights and dignity of women and girls are safeguarded. The recommendations are designed to create a media environment that is safe and empowering for all and resilient in the face of emerging challenges in the digital age.

2.0 Desk Review/Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a form of gender-based violence which women and girls experience because of their gender or that affects them disproportionately. The Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa defines such violence to include “all acts perpetrated against women which cause or could cause them physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm, including the threat to take such acts; or to undertake the imposition of arbitrary restrictions on or deprivation of fundamental freedoms in private or public life in peacetime and during situations of armed conflicts or of war.”

VAWG, therefore, encompasses many forms of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, honour killings and maiming, forced abortion, emotional abuse, sexual violence as a weapon of war and trafficking of women and girls. According to the Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2018, at least 31% of women 15-49 years old have experienced physical violence. This reflects the global trend, which shows that one in three women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime (WHO, 2021).

The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, in her 2020 report, combating violence against women journalists (A/HRC/44/52) highlighted, femicide, rape, sexual violence, discrimination and sexual harassment, online violence, threats of violence as manifestations of gender-based violence against women journalists. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) survey showed that one in two women journalists had experienced gender-based violence, including



online trolling while working. The frequency of such targeted attacks is alarming.

While the issue of violence against women in journalism has been gaining increasing attention globally, it remains underexplored within the Nigerian media landscape. This review synthesises the existing literature on violence against female journalists, focusing on online harassment, workplace violence, and systemic gender discrimination, to highlight a significant research gap in the Nigerian context. By examining various studies, we can illustrate the broader patterns of abuse and discrimination experienced by women journalists and underscore the importance of addressing these issues in Nigeria.

2.2 Online Harassment and Gendered Abuse



The prevalence of online harassment against female journalists is a prominent theme in contemporary research. Gardiner's (2018) study of the Guardian's comments section sought to explore how gender and minority status influenced the type and frequency of abusive comments directed at journalists. The study revealed that female and minority journalists faced disproportionately high levels of abuse compared to their male and majority counterparts. This abuse often manifested as derogatory comments and trolling, primarily targeting women journalists. The objective of Gardiner's study was to analyse how online environments, particularly comment sections, serve as arenas for reinforcing gender and racial biases, thus offering valuable insights into the digital challenges faced by marginalized groups in media.

UNESCO's (2020) report, "The Chilling: Global Trends in Online Violence Against Women Journalists," corroborates these findings by revealing that 73% of female journalists globally have experienced some form of online violence, including threats of sexual violence, doxing, and cyberstalking. The report highlights the psychological toll of online harassment, often leading to self-censorship and withdrawal from public engagement. UNESCO emphasizes the need for robust institutional and legal frameworks to protect

women journalists in the digital realm, as well as platform accountability. Nadim and Fladmoe (2021) expanded this discourse by examining how online harassment impacts journalistic freedom and mental health, particularly for women. Their study found that online threats against female journalists often lead to diminished professional participation, as women are more likely to avoid sensitive topics or withdraw from digital platforms altogether. This reinforces the idea that online harassment not only threatens individual journalists but also undermines press freedom.

Similarly, Chen et al. (2020) found that female journalists across different countries, including Germany, India, and the US, experienced rampant online gendered harassment that impacted their professional engagement. Such harassment included sexist comments and threats, leading to self-censorship and altered reporting practices. Burch et al. (2023) further expanded this understanding by focusing on gendered abuse in sports journalism. The study demonstrated how trigger events in sports lead to escalated online abuse against female journalists, highlighting the intersection of gendered discrimination and the specific context of sports reporting. The findings emphasised the need for safeguarding policies and greater awareness of how trigger events can exacerbate online harassment.

Additionally, a global study by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, 2017) found that nearly one in two women journalists reported experiencing gender-based violence at work, including online harassment. The IFJ called for urgent reforms, including better legal protections, safety protocols, and institutional responses from media organisations. These studies collectively highlight the pervasive and systemic nature of gendered online harassment against women journalists and underline the need for immediate interventions.

2.3 Workplace Violence and Structural Barriers

Workplace violence against female journalists extends beyond online harassment to include physical and verbal abuse within the professional environment. (Bombi et al. (2023)) study examined how political figures in Brazil and South Africa enact violence against female journalists, drawing attention to the strategic use of gender-based violence to undermine and silence women reporters. This violence includes both physical assaults and verbal attacks, demonstrating a global pattern of gendered violence in journalism. UNESCO (2019) also pointed to the prevalence of workplace violence, noting that many media organisations lack the necessary safety protocols to protect female journalists. This lack of institutional support exacerbates the vulnerabilities faced by women in media, particularly in regions with weak enforcement of gender-based violence laws.

Blumell and Mulupi (2020) explored similar issues in Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria, finding that Nigerian female journalists experience high levels of hostile and benevolent sexism. Despite the global #MeToo movement highlighting gender inequalities, the Nigerian context remains particularly severe, with high rates of sexual harassment reported by female journalists. This study highlights the systemic nature of gender discrimination in newsrooms and the urgent need for structural changes.

2.4 Systemic Discrimination and Gender Representation

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within media organisations is another critical aspect of gender discrimination. Aribisala (2023) argued that while digital media tools have helped reduce some gender-based discrimination in journalism, Nigerian female journalists still face significant barriers, including unequal



opportunities and limited advancement to top positions. This reflects a broader issue of systemic gender discrimination that persists despite technological advancements. Nweze et al. (2023) and Nwabueze (2012) further illustrate these barriers by examining audience perceptions and gender relations within Nigerian media. Nweze et al. (2023) found that negative perceptions of female journalists contribute to their marginalisation and reduced impact in the media landscape. Similarly, Nwabueze (2012)'s research highlighted the structural issues within Nigerian media that perpetuate the underrepresentation and discriminatory treatment of female journalists. O'Donnell and Sweet (2018) explored similar patterns globally, highlighting how women in media leadership face additional challenges compared to their male counterparts, including gendered expectations and workplace discrimination. Their research calls for gender parity policies within media organisations to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in leadership roles.

2.5 The Nigerian Context: Gaps and Relevance



While the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into the experiences of female journalists globally, there is a notable gap in the literature, specifically addressing the nuances of violence against women journalists in Nigeria. Most of the existing research focuses on broader regional or international contexts, often overlooking the unique challenges faced by Nigerian journalists. This oversight is significant given the distinctive socio-political and cultural dynamics in Nigeria, which contribute to both the manifestations and impacts of gender-based violence in journalism. For instance, the studies on online harassment, such as those by Gardiner (2018) and Chen et al. (2020), primarily focus on Western contexts or a broader range of countries without delving into how these patterns manifest in Nigerian media. Similarly, while Bombi et al. (2023) and Blumell and Mulupi (2020) provide valid comparisons with other countries, there needs to be more research on how the specific political and media environment in Nigeria influences the experiences of female journalists. Ujene and Ojedokun (2021) and Alade and Sanusi (2022) touch on related issues of violence against journalists in Nigeria. However, their focus is broader and does not explicitly address gendered violence or the

experiences of female journalists in depth. The need for research that specifically examines the intersection of gender, media practice, and violence in Nigeria is evident.

2.6 Contribution and Timeliness of the Present Study

The proposed study on violence against women and girls in Nigerian media aims to address this critical research gap by focusing specifically on the Nigerian context. By analysing the experiences of female journalists and exploring how gendered violence impacts their work, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges women face in Nigerian journalism. This focus is timely, given the increasing global attention to gender-based violence and the need for localised research that can inform targeted interventions. The study will build on the existing literature by incorporating the unique socio-political and cultural factors that influence gender-based violence in Nigeria. It will provide valuable insights into the specific manifestations of violence against female journalists, including online harassment, workplace abuse, and systemic discrimination. Furthermore, by highlighting the gaps in current research and offering recommendations for addressing these issues, the study aims to contribute to policy development and advocacy efforts to improve women's safety and representation in Nigerian media. Given that the literature on violence against women journalists reveals a troubling pattern of abuse and discrimination across various contexts, there is a need to illuminate the obscure relations in understanding these issues, specifically within the Nigerian media landscape. The proposed study is both relevant and timely, as it will address this gap by examining the unique challenges female journalists face in Nigeria. By focusing on online harassment, workplace violence, and systemic discrimination, the study will provide critical insights into the experiences of Nigerian women journalists and contribute to the development of more effective strategies for addressing gender-based violence in journalism.

3.0 Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Nigeria's media sector. The methodology combines both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of women in the media, the policies in place to address gender-based violence, and the effectiveness of these policies in practice.

3.1 Desk Review

The study reviewed existing literature, policy documents, and reports on VAWG within the media, both globally and within Nigeria. The desk review covered international frameworks, Nigerian laws, institutional policies, and relevant studies to provide a contextual foundation for understanding how VAWG manifests in Nigeria's media sector. This review also highlighted gaps in policy implementation and the media's role in either perpetuating or mitigating VAWG.

3.2 Qualitative Data Collection

A structured survey was conducted with media professionals to gather quantitative data on their experiences with VAWG, awareness of existing policies, and perceptions of the effectiveness of institutional responses. The survey was distributed across six geo-political zones, covering the following states:

- North Central: Abuja, Kwara
- North East: Borno, Adamawa
- South East: Enugu, Ebonyi
- North West: Kaduna, Sokoto
- South South: Cross River, Rivers
- South West: Lagos, Oyo

The survey aimed to:

- Capture the prevalence of both offline and online violence experienced by female journalists.
- Assess the level of awareness and enforcement of policies related to gender-

- based violence within media organisations.
- Gather participants' views on how these policies impact their safety and professional experiences.

A total of 126 media professionals responded to the survey, and the data was analysed using statistical software to identify trends and correlations related to VAWG experiences and policy awareness and this also provided a representative sample of media professionals from urban and semi-urban regions.

3.3 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

To supplement the survey data, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with media personnel across various platforms, including radio, television, and print media. These interviews provided qualitative insights into the personal experiences of media professionals with VAWG, institutional responses to such incidents, and suggestions for improving workplace safety and gender policies in the media sector.

The KIIs focused on:

- Understanding the unique challenges faced by women in different media platforms.
- Exploring how workplace cultures and media organisations address or fail to address incidents of VAWG.
- Identifying gaps in legal and policy frameworks that could be filled to better protect female media professionals.

3.4 Data Analysis

The survey data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify key patterns and trends in respondents' experiences of VAWG. This included measuring the prevalence of online harassment, the level of awareness regarding institutional policies, and the effectiveness of current interventions.

The qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed to uncover recurring themes related to

gender-based violence in the media. Key themes identified included lack of support from institutions, inconsistencies in policy enforcement, and the psychological impact of online abuse.



3.5 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of the research, ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection and reporting process, and participants were assured of their anonymity.

4.0 Findings and Discussion



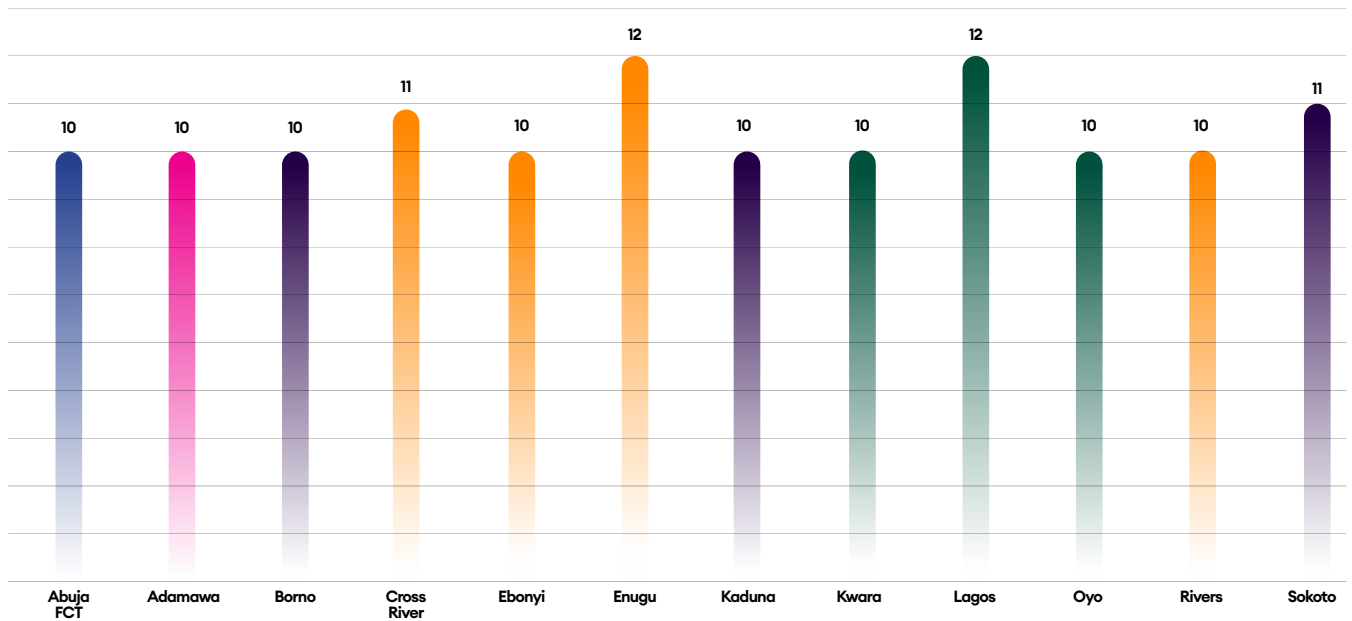
The survey respondents represent a diverse cross-section of media professionals in Nigeria, with some notable trends in their demographic profile.

4.1 Demographics

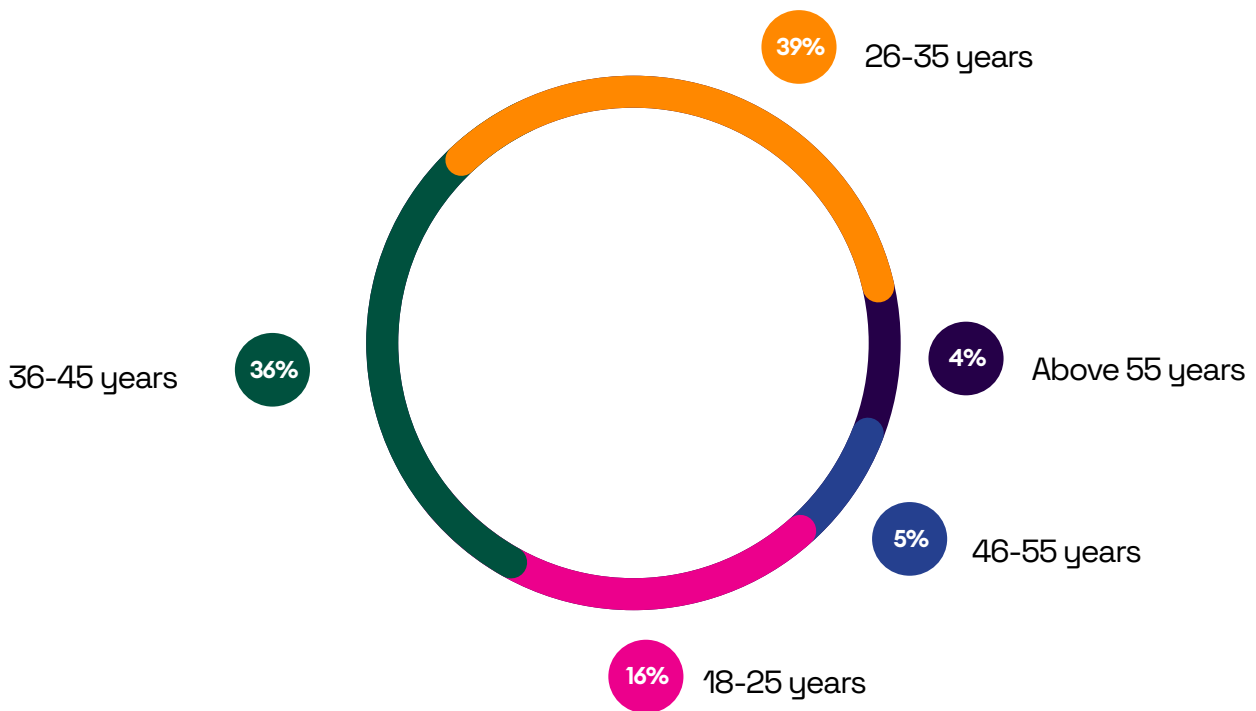
4.1.1 Geographical Distribution of Respondents

The survey data reveals significant regional disparities in representation, which are crucial for understanding the challenges faced by women in Nigeria’s media sector. Enugu and Lagos had the highest representation, with 12 respondents each, reflecting strong engagement from these major urban centres and potentially mirroring broader urban trends. Abuja-FCT, Borno, Ebonyi, Kaduna, Kwara, Adamawa, Oyo, and Rivers each had ten respondents, contributing to a balanced regional perspective. Cross River and Sokoto, with 11 respondents each, added valuable regional diversity. This distribution highlights the complexities of addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Nigeria’s media sector, a field where gender discrimination and professional hazards are prevalent. The urban solid representation may provide deep insights into the challenges faced by women in major cities, while the more even distribution from other states ensures a well-rounded view. The minimal representation from Adamawa underscores the need to consider regional variations when interpreting the data, emphasising the importance of understanding local contexts to address VAWG effectively across Nigeria

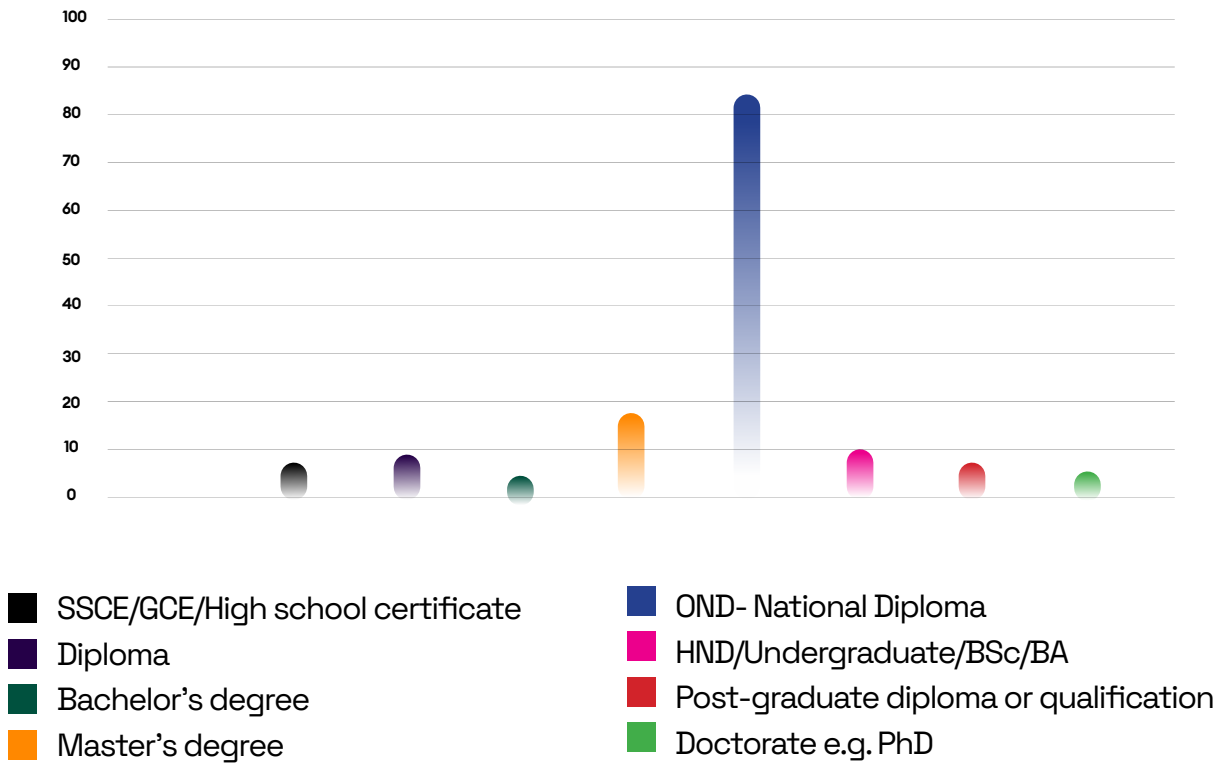
4.1.1 Geographical Distribution of Respondents



4.1.2 Age Demographics

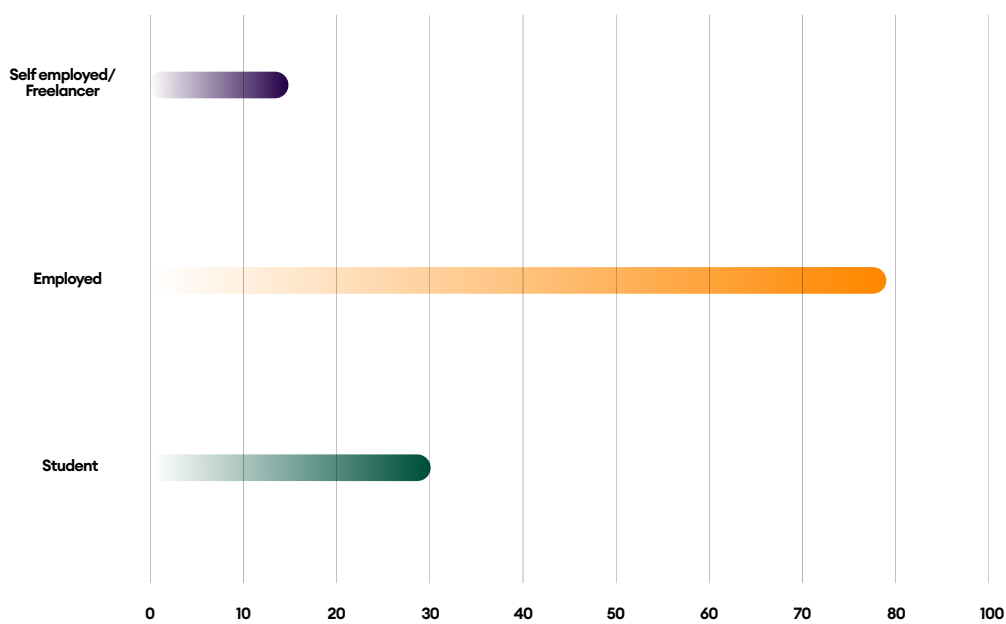


4.1.3 Educational Background



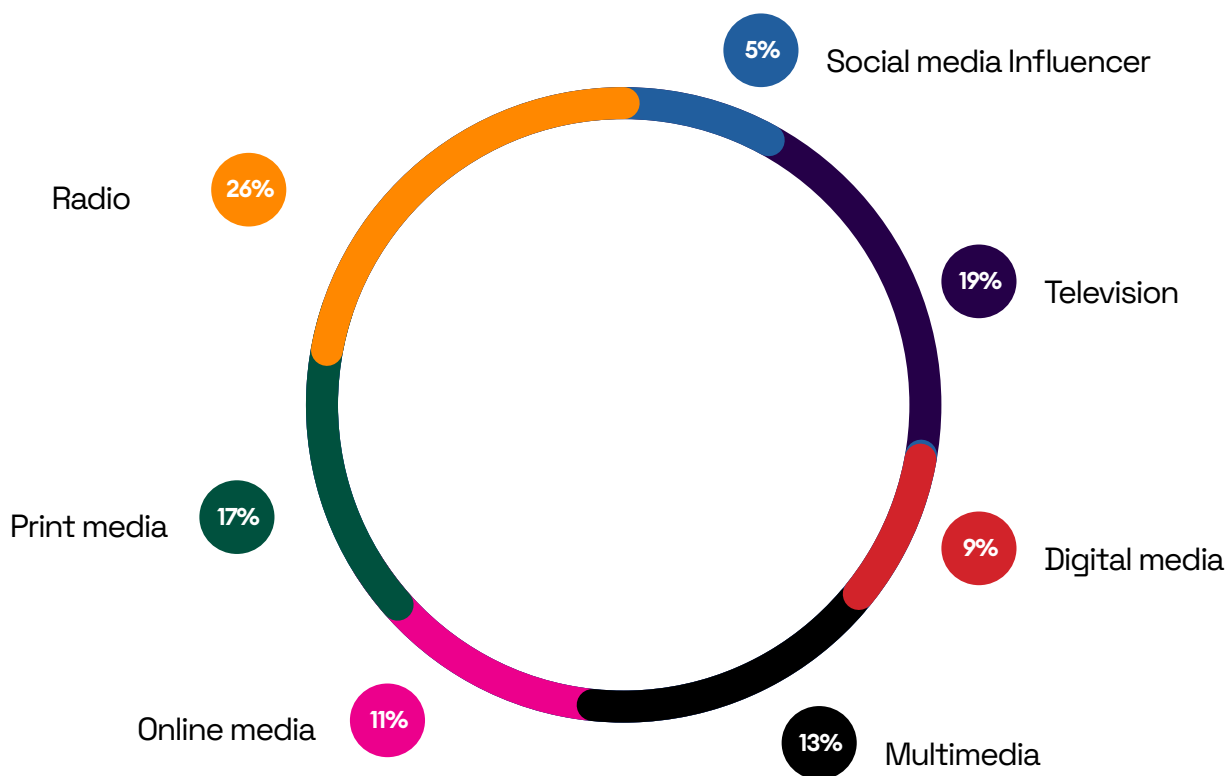
4.1.4 Occupation and Media Specialisation

Occupation



4.1.4 Occupation and Media Specialisation

Media Specialisation



In the context of Nigeria's media landscape, which faces significant gender equity challenges, the data underscores the complex dynamics affecting female media professionals. The high representation of younger individuals with less experience (0-5 years) suggests a workforce that is navigating a rapidly evolving media environment, which often lacks robust safety protocols and legal protections. This demographic is likely to be more vulnerable to online harassment and violence, given their engagement with digital media platforms. Moreover, the distribution across different media specialisations—such as digital media, multimedia, print, and broadcast journalism—indicates varied exposure to gender-based violence. The prominence of roles like social media influencers and online journalists highlights the increased risks associated with online spaces, where harassment and abuse are prevalent. The data also shows a relatively small number of older professionals with more experience, suggesting that long-term career stability in media, especially for women, may be challenging.

This distribution of data is relevant as it illustrates the intersection of age, education, and media specialisation with the broader issues of gender discrimination and professional hazards. It highlights the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms tailored to the experiences of younger, less experienced media professionals who are more likely to encounter online violence. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies to address VAWG in Nigeria's media industry and ensuring a safer environment for female journalists and media workers.

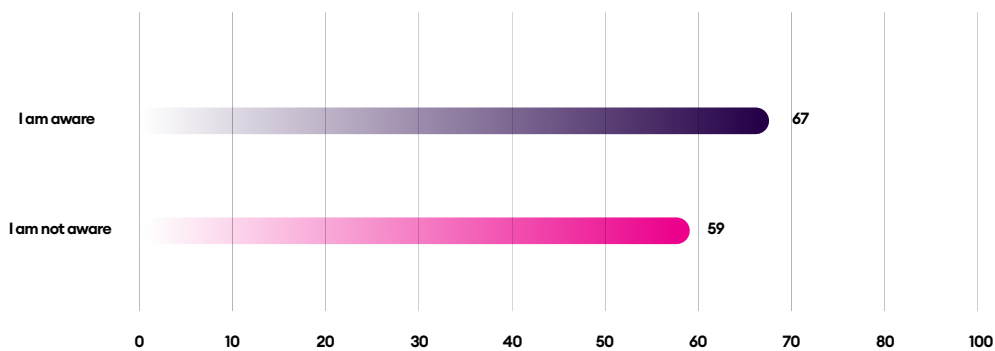
4.2 Section A: Policy and Regulatory Framework

The survey data reveals a complex landscape regarding policies and frameworks addressing VAWG in the media:

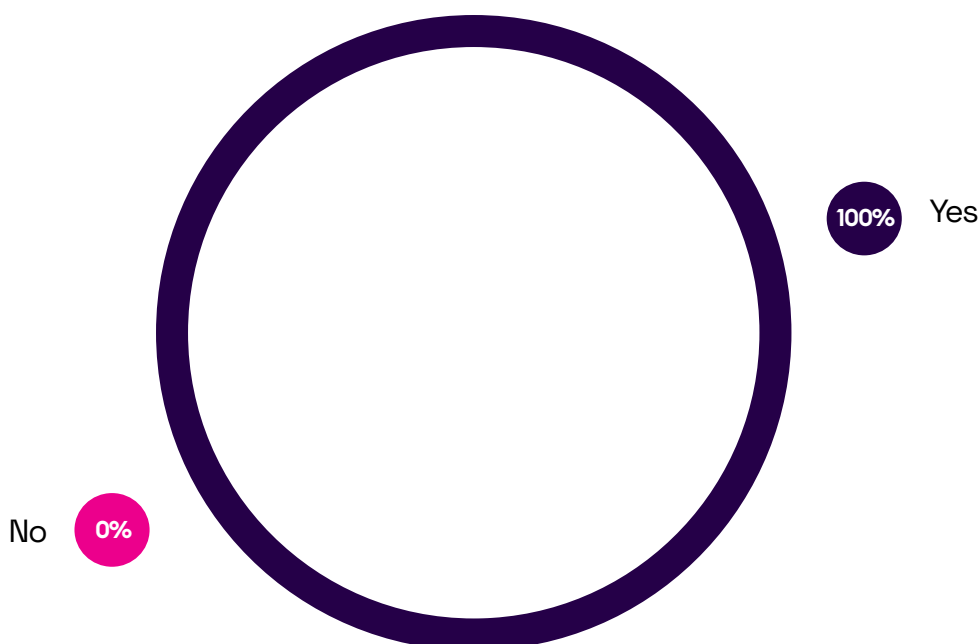
4.2.1 Awareness of Existing Policies

The survey data highlights a critical gap in awareness of policies addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Nigeria's media sector. Of the respondents, 67 (53%) are aware of existing policies, while 59 (47%) are not. Despite this split, an overwhelming 81 respondents (69%) believe there should be policies or regulations to address VAWG in the media, with this belief being particularly strong among the 47% unaware of current frameworks. Sources of information for those aware include social media, workplace policies, professional training, and government announcements. The reliance on these channels emphasises the need for comprehensive and accessible communication strategies. These findings suggest a strong demand for more visible and effective policy interventions, indicating that policymakers should focus on improving the dissemination, visibility, and enforcement of VAWG policies within the media sector to ensure broader awareness and implementation.

Level of awareness of existing policies and framework addressing VAWG in the media



Need for policies or regulations to address VAWG in the media



4.2.2 Effectiveness and Adherence

Out of the respondents, 18 (13.6%) believe these policies are highly effective, while 20 (17%) find them moderately effective. The largest segment, 42 respondents (33.1%), considers the policies somewhat effective, suggesting that while some progress has been made, there is considerable room for improvement. Additionally, 29 respondents (22%) indicate that these policies are effective only in certain organisations, highlighting inconsistencies in implementation. A smaller group, 11 respondents (7.6%), view the policies as effective in theory but not in practice, pointing to a gap between policy formulation and real-world impact. With 6 respondents (5.9%) offering no answer, the data underscores the mixed effectiveness of current policies, signalling a need for stronger enforcement and more comprehensive strategies across the media sector.

-Media reporting on VAWG/GBV is recognised as important, but specific policies are lacking.

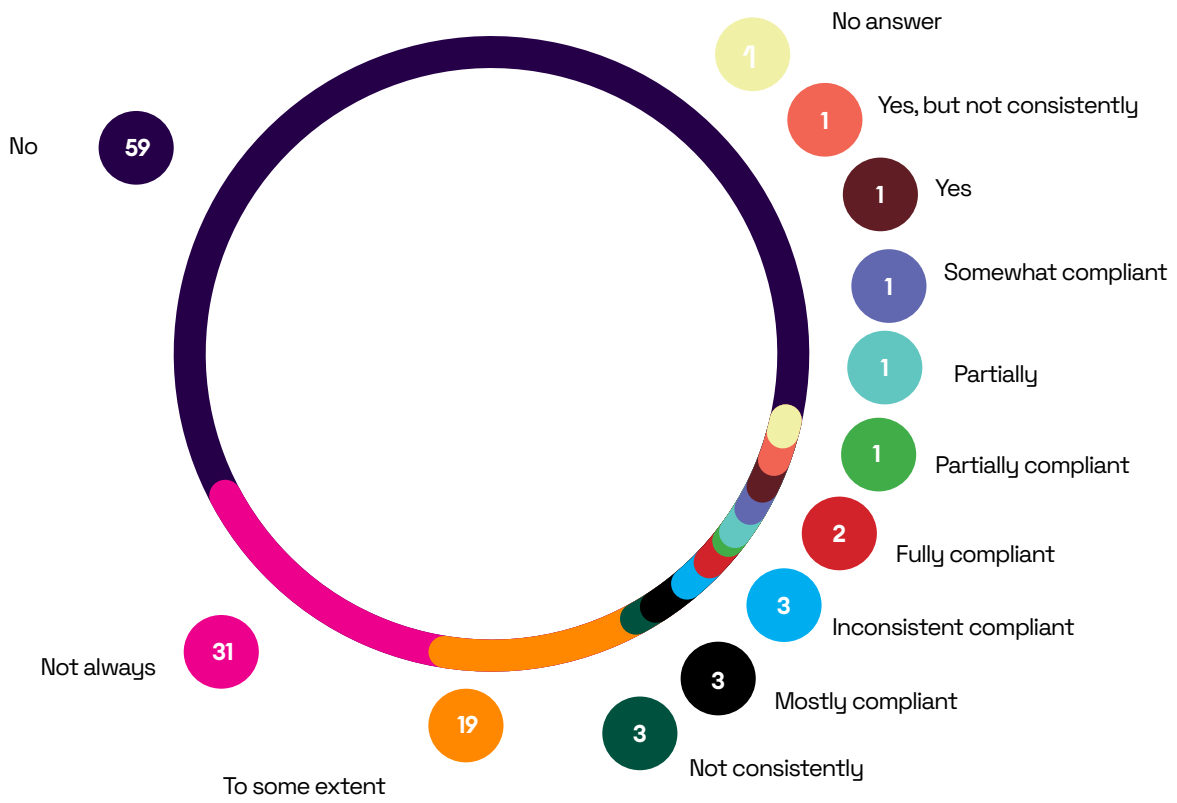
-Some media houses have specialised pages for VAWG/GBV coverage, but formal internal policies are absent.

Existing gender policies focus on broader issues like equal opportunities rather than specific VAWG/GBV concerns.

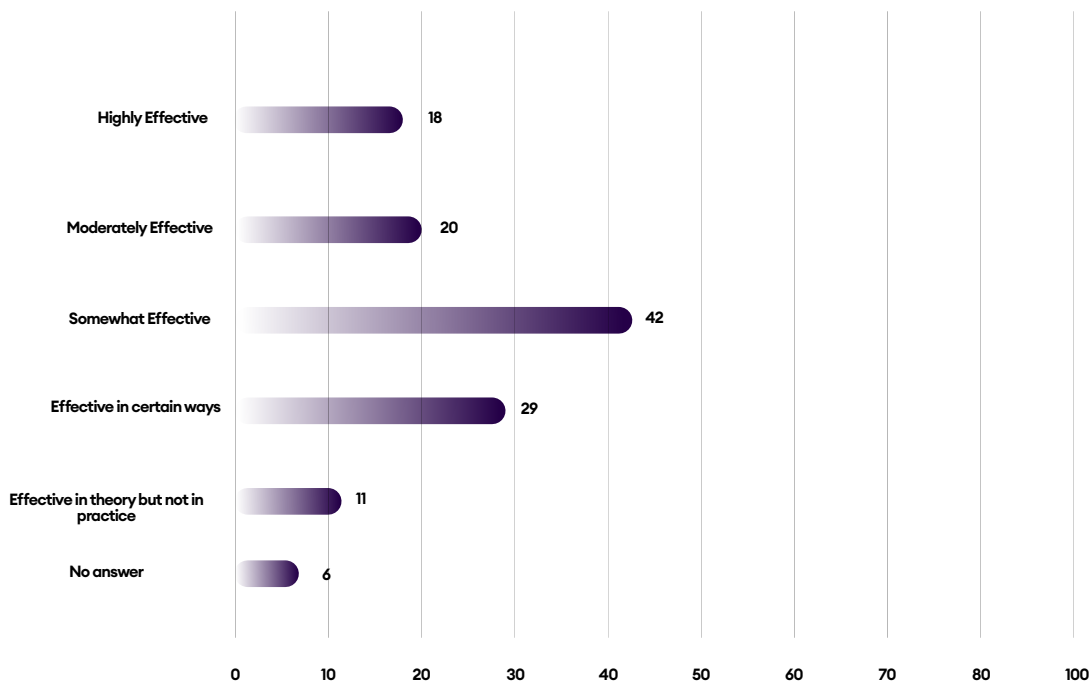
- Effectiveness of policies is hampered by lack of interest, resources, and formal evaluation protocols

Regarding compliance with these policies, the statistics present a concerning scenario. Only 2 respondents (1.7%) believe that media organisations are fully compliant, while 3 (2.5%) indicate mostly compliant, and 59 (43.2%) note that organisations comply to some extent. A significant number, 19 respondents (13.6%), outright state that organisations are not compliant, with additional responses showing inconsistent compliance (0.8%), partial compliance (2.5%), and other forms of limited adherence. The fact that only a small fraction sees full compliance, while a large proportion acknowledges only partial or inconsistent compliance, indicates a troubling disconnect between policy and practice within Nigerian media organisations. This lack of rigorous enforcement leaves women particularly vulnerable to violence and harassment, especially in the rapidly transforming and expanding media landscape in Nigeria. These findings highlight the urgent need for media organisations to adopt, implement, and monitor these policies more effectively to ensure the safety and equity of female media professionals.

Are media organisations adhering to these policies ?

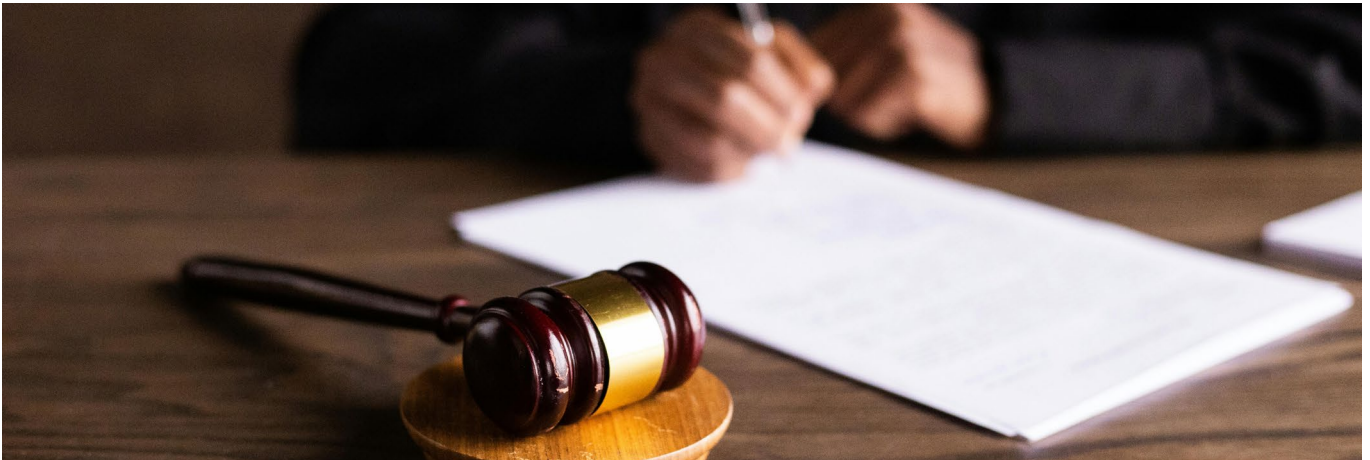


Effectiveness of policies in reducing VAWG in the media



4.3 Section B: Institutional and Governance Structures

The survey reveals significant gaps in awareness and perceived effectiveness of institutions addressing VAWG in the media.

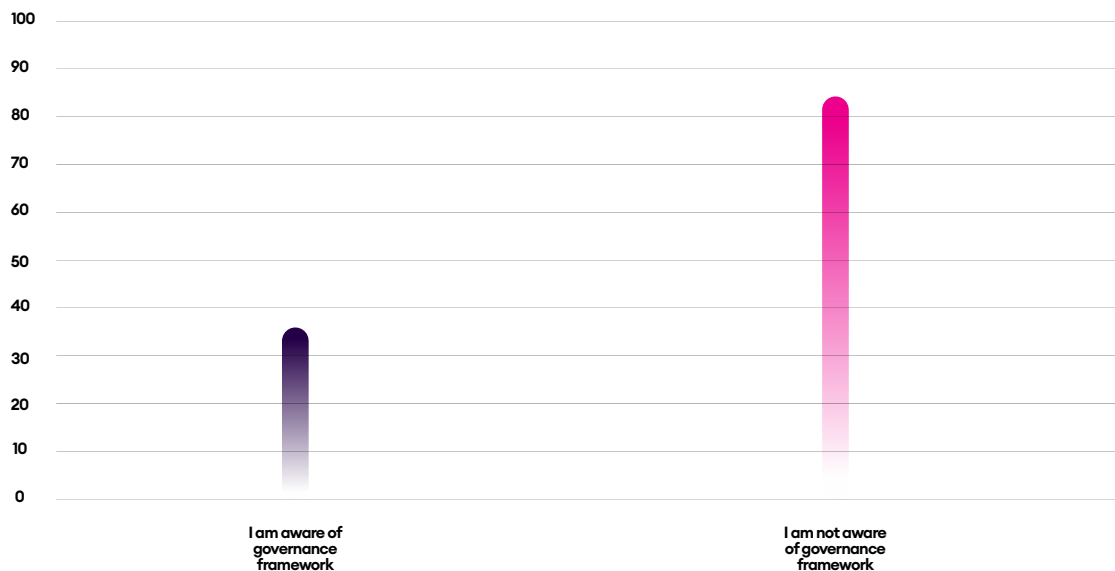


4.3.1 Awareness of Institutions

The survey data reveals that 71% of respondents (86) are aware of specific institutions or governance structures addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the media, while 29% (35) are not. This level of awareness indicates that a majority of media professionals recognize the existence of bodies designed to protect women in the media sector. However, the fact that nearly a third remain unaware points to a significant gap that could undermine the effectiveness of these institutions.

Among those who are aware, key institutions include the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), which regulates broadcast content and enforces gender representation guidelines; the Nigerian Press Council (NPC), responsible for monitoring gender-sensitive reporting; and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), which oversees online and digital media. Despite this awareness, the substantial number of uninformed respondents suggests that more needs to be done to ensure these governance structures are not only recognized but also actively utilized to combat VAWG in the media. Strengthening communication, outreach, and training could help close this awareness gap and enhance the effectiveness of existing policies and frameworks.

Awareness of Institutional governance framework



4.3.1.1 Key Institutions Identified



National Broadcasting Commission (NBC):

Regulates broadcast content and enforces gender representation guidelines.



Nigerian Press Council (NPC):

Monitors and addresses gender-sensitive reporting in the print media.



National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP):

Combats human trafficking and exploitation, including in the media.



Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development:

Develops policies and programs to address gender-based violence, including in media.



National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):

Investigates and addresses human rights violations, including those related to media representation.



Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC):

Regulates online and digital media, including social media platforms.

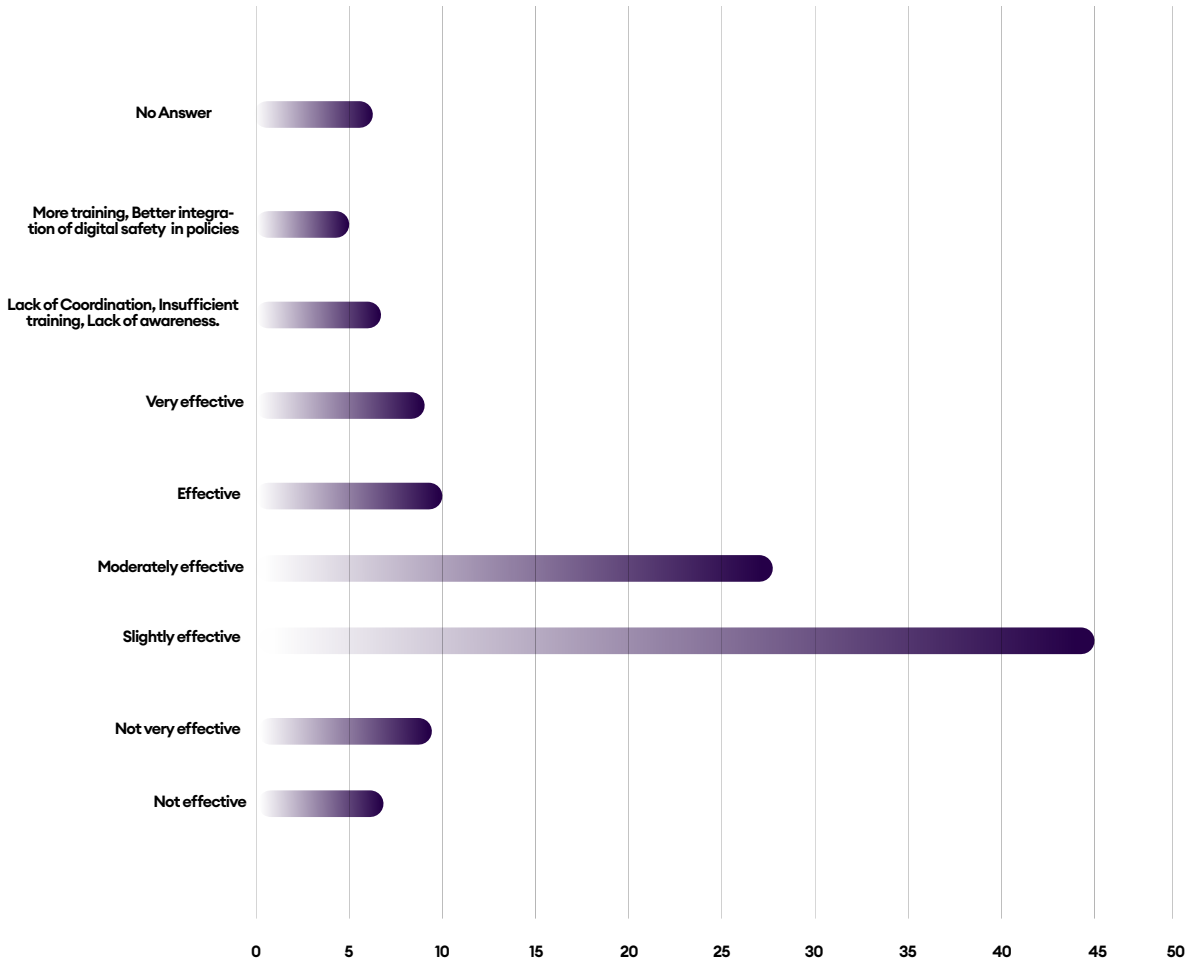


Media Watchdog Groups (e.g., Media Rights Agenda and International Press Centre):

Monitor and report on media representation and portrayal of women and girls.

4.3.2 Effectiveness of Institutions

The survey data reveals a diverse perception of the effectiveness of institutions addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the media. Only 7 respondents rated these institutions as “effective” and another 5 as “very effective,” while 28 respondents considered them “moderately effective.” Conversely, 7 respondents found them “not effective” and 9 “not very effective,” with 7 respondents providing no answer.



4.3.3 Challenges in Coordination and Collaboration

Challenges identified include lack of coordination, noted by 20 respondents (18%), insufficient communication channels, mentioned by 34 respondents (30%), and resource constraints affecting 31 respondents (28%). Cultural differences and lack of political will were cited by 35 (31%) and 30 (27%) respondents, respectively. To improve effectiveness, suggestions included enhancing regulatory frameworks, increasing gender sensitivity, and improving funding and resources. Addressing these issues is crucial for better tackling VAWG in the media sector

Challenges in Collaboration

Differing priorities and objectives: A major challenge, highlighted by 20 responses, is differing priorities and objectives among institutions.

Lack of communication channels: 34 respondents mentioned the lack of communication channels as a significant barrier.

Cultural and contextual differences: Cited by 35 respondents as a critical factor hindering effective collaborations.

Resource Constraint: Identified by 31 respondents as a challenge, impacting the ability to address VAWG effectively.

Lack of political will: Mentioned by 30 respondents as a significant barrier to implementing effective measures.

4.3.5 Effectiveness of Legislative Framework

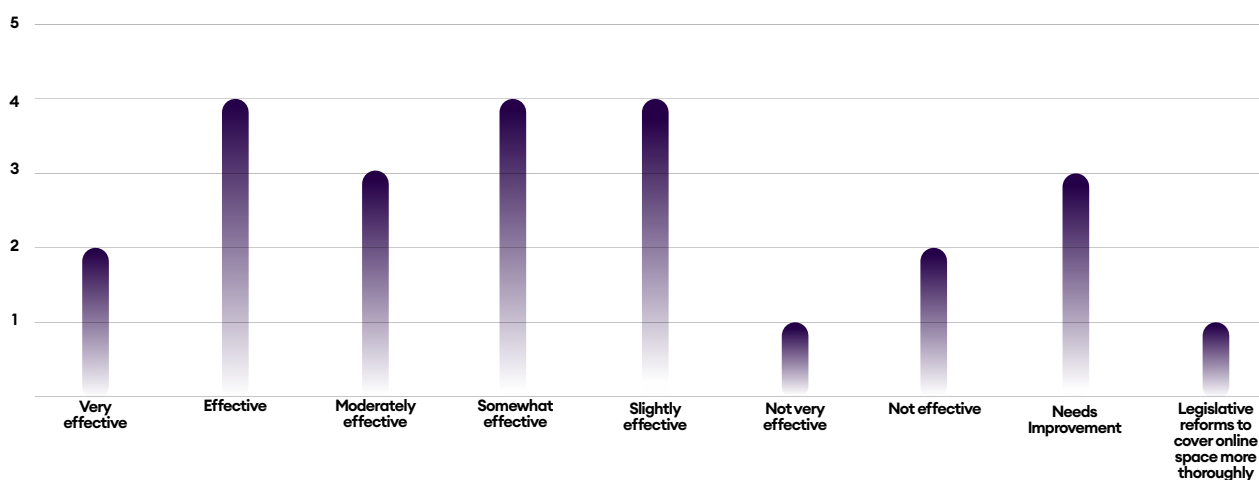
The effectiveness of legislative frameworks addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the media sector is perceived with mixed confidence, reflecting both strengths and significant gaps. Among the respondents, 13% believe these frameworks are effective or very effective, suggesting some success in

“Effectiveness of collaborations often depends on the media house’s influence”

“Regulatory bodies like the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) have some influence, but their involvement in promoting VAWG/GBV reporting is often minimal”

addressing VAWG. However, a larger portion, about 23%, views these frameworks as only moderately or somewhat effective, indicating that while policies exist, their impact is limited. Additionally, another 23% find the frameworks slightly effective or ineffective, raising concerns about the adequacy of current legislation to tackle the unique challenges faced by women in the media. These mixed perceptions highlight the urgent need for legislative reforms that thoroughly address online spaces, where much of the harassment occurs, alongside regular policy reviews, improved enforcement mechanisms, and penalties for non-compliance.

Effectiveness of Legislative Framework

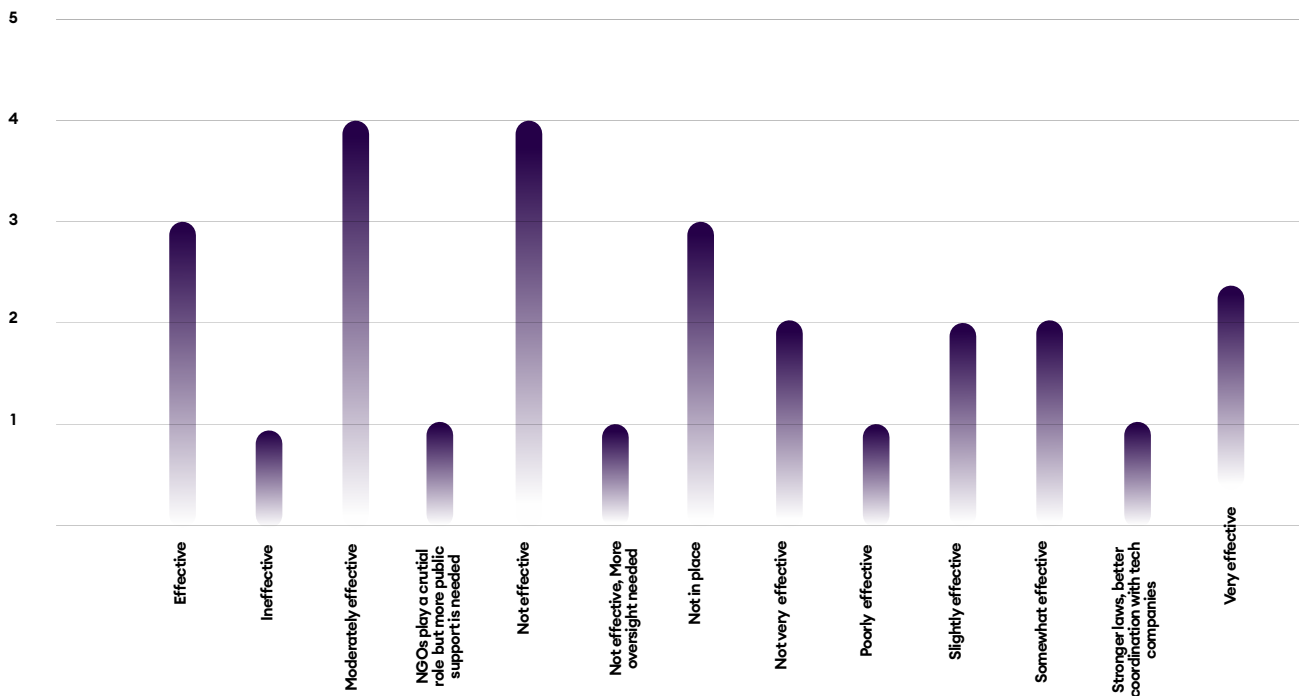


“Collaboration between media organisations and government bodies on VAWG/GBV is limited and inconsistent”

4.3.6 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Similarly, the effectiveness of current Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanisms is also viewed inconsistently. Only a small portion of respondents (13%) find these mechanisms effective, while 23% consider them ineffective or slightly effective, pointing to significant implementation gaps. Additionally, 13% view the M&E mechanisms as moderately effective, underscoring the need for more frequent evaluations, better data collection, and increased transparency. These findings emphasise the necessity for stronger institutional and governance structures to combat VAWG in Nigerian media, including enhanced legislative support and improved coordination with tech companies. Such measures are essential to creating a safer environment for women in the media, ensuring that existing policies are not only in place but are also actively and effectively enforced.

How effective are current Monitoring Mechanisms



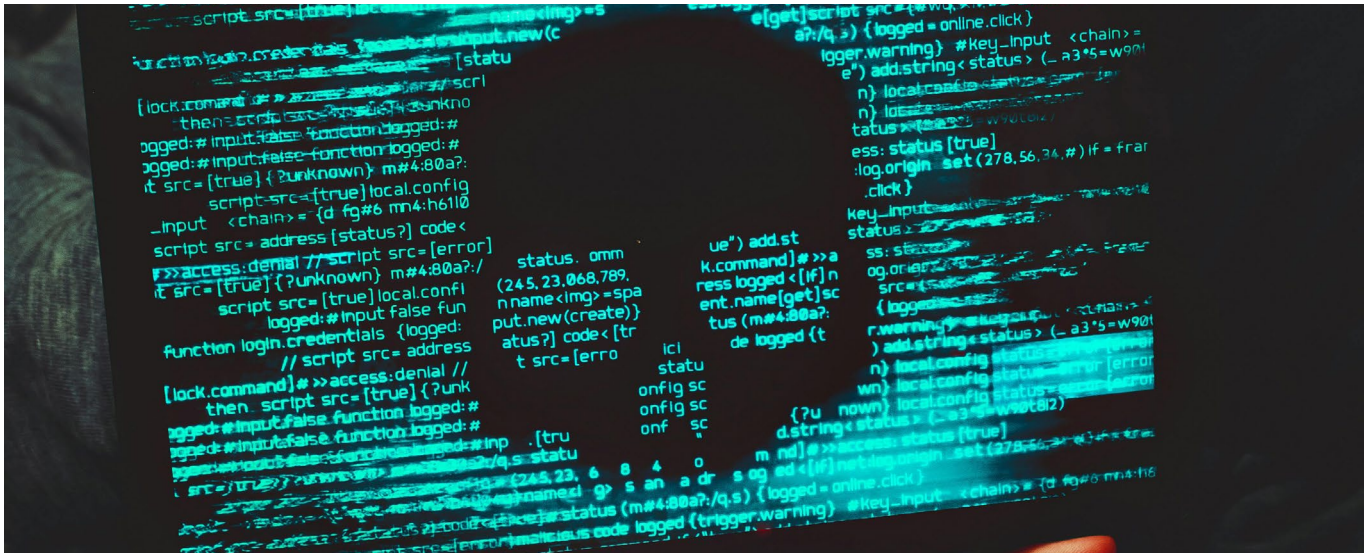
4.4 Section C: Online Safety of Women Journalists

The survey data highlights significant concerns regarding the online safety of women journalists:

4.4.1 Awareness of Online Safety Issues

- 89 respondents (71%) are aware of specific online safety issues women journalists face
- 37 respondents (29%) are not aware

4.4.2 Common Threats Identified



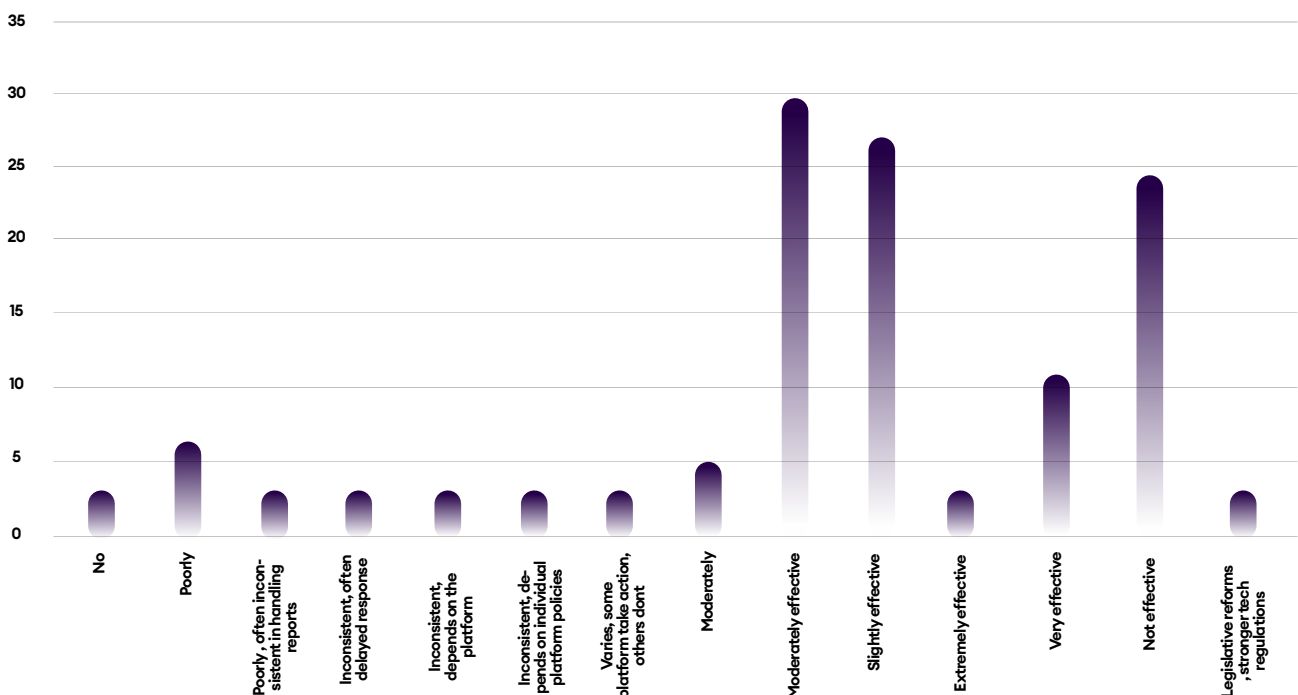
Common Issues of Online Abuse

- Cyberstalking
- Cyberbullying
- Doxxing (Publishing Private Information)
- Sexual Harassment
- Hacking or Phishing Attacks
- Trolling, and Hate speech

Many respondents cited a combination of these threats, indicating that women journalists often face multiple forms of online harassment simultaneously.

4.4.5 Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms in Addressing Threats:

How useful is social media in addressing online Violence against Women and Girls



The data indicates a concerning disparity in the implementation of policies to protect women journalists from online threats. With nearly an even split between organisations that have specific policies (48%) and those that do not (52%), it is evident that a substantial portion of the media sector lacks formal mechanisms to address online harassment. This uneven distribution highlights a significant gap in the protective measures available to women journalists, reflecting the broader context of insufficient institutional support and inadequate safety protocols in Nigeria’s media landscape.

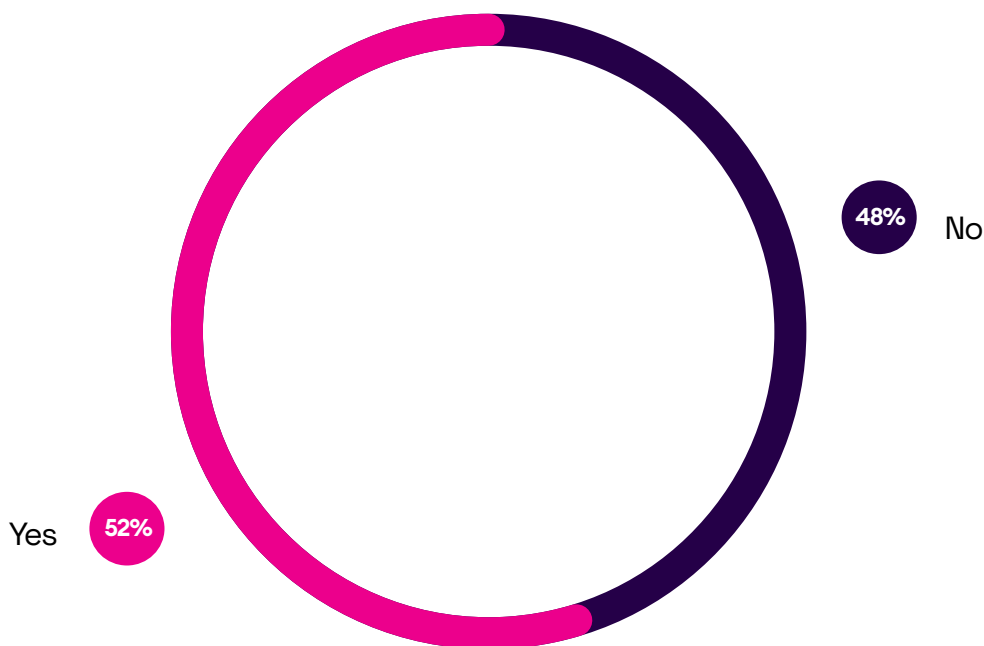
- “Many organisations lack specific policies to protect women journalists from online threats”

- “Journalists are particularly vulnerable when personal information is shared online”

- Call for more structured training on online safety, formation of online taskforces, and improved collaboration with security agencies

Given the severe nature of online threats faced by women journalists, including cyberstalking, doxxing, and sexual harassment, the lack of comprehensive policies in more than half of the organisations is particularly troubling. The absence of such policies not only exacerbates the risks for journalists but also undermines their ability to work safely and effectively. This scenario underscores the need for a more consistent and robust approach to online safety within the media sector, aligning with the urgent call for improved institutional responses and safety measures to support women journalists. Without widespread policy implementation and effective protective measures, the professional and personal well-being of women journalists remains vulnerable to significant online threats.

Are there policies in place to protect women journalists in your Organisation?





4.5 Section D: Legal Protection Framework

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) in Section 39, and many international and regional treaties that Nigeria have ratified (African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 9); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19) protect the right to Freedom of Expression and the Press. The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa (2019) in states clearly in Principle 20(1) and (2) that governments shall guarantee the safety of journalists and other media practitioners and take measures to prevent attacks on journalists. The Declaration in Principle 20(6) further urges the government to take into cognizance the peculiar situation of women journalists by "addressing gender specific safety concerns, including sexual and gender-based violence, intimidation and harassment." The government has an obligation to ensure that journalists can practice their profession, freely, without intimidation and in a safe and conducive environment. This includes ensuring that legal frameworks are robust enough to prevent and protect journalists and responsive to tackling gender-specific attacks on women journalists.

Due to gaps in the criminal code and penal code, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015 and related VAPP laws in several states in Nigeria were adopted to deal with VAWG. However, there is no specific law or policy on VAWG in the media. Other laws, such as the Cybercrimes Act 2015 (amended), which addressed online criminal activity, have disappointingly been used to intimidate journalists who disseminate information online. (Razen, 2024).

Despite growing awareness about VAPP and other laws, increased reporting of VAWG, and the challenges women journalists face, there are limited or no policies by media houses to tackle the issue of VAWG in the media. This gap must be filled to improve women journalists' safety and security.

4.5.1 Legal Reforms Needed To Protect Women Journalists From Online Threats

- **Stronger Anti-Harassment Laws:** The most frequently mentioned need is for stronger anti-harassment laws that specifically address online threats against women journalists. Such laws should be designed to provide clear legal definitions of online threats, which would make it easier for law enforcement agencies to act and for victims to seek justice.
- **Better Enforcement of Existing Laws:** Even where laws exist, their enforcement is often inadequate. There is a significant call for better enforcement mechanisms to ensure that the existing legal frameworks are more effective in protecting women journalists from online harassment.
- **Faster Legal Processes:** The slow pace of legal processes is a barrier to justice. Speedier handling of cases involving online threats could deter potential offenders and provide timely protection for victims.
- **International Cooperation on Cybercrime:** Given the global nature of the internet, international cooperation is crucial in addressing online harassment, especially when the threats come from different jurisdictions. Collaboration between countries can help close legal loopholes and enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement.
- **Clearer Legal Definitions:** Many existing laws lack specificity regarding what constitutes an online threat. Clearer legal definitions would help in the consistent application of the law and in making it easier for victims to report and for authorities to prosecute.
- **Implementation and Sanctioning of Violators:** Stronger penalties and consistent implementation are needed to deter online harassment. Ensuring that violators are sanctioned appropriately would reinforce the seriousness of these crimes.



4.5.2 Gaps in Current Policies Addressing VAWG In Media

- **Lack of Comprehensive Guidelines:** Many current policies lack the necessary detail to be effective. Comprehensive guidelines that cover all aspects of VAWG in media are needed.
- **Inadequate Enforcement Mechanisms:** Even where policies exist, they are often not enforced adequately. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms is crucial to making these policies work.
- **Poor Public Awareness:** There is a significant gap in public awareness about the issues of VAWG in the media, which can hinder the effectiveness of policies.
- **Inconsistent Application Across Different Media Platforms:** Policies are not always applied consistently across various media platforms, leading to uneven protection for women journalists.
- **Lack of Specificity:** Many policies are too vague, lacking clear definitions and actionable steps, which limits their effectiveness in addressing the specific challenges faced by women journalists.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the survey responses and key informant insights, the following recommendations are proposed to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the media. These recommendations align with the principles outlined in the Kigali Declaration on Gender, Media, and ICTs, which advocates for the protection of women journalists and the promotion of gender-responsive media policies:



5.1 Developing a Policy Framework for VAWG in Media

- Media organisations should develop and implement inclusive policies that address the different ways women and girls in the media experience violence. This includes recognizing the specific challenges faced by marginalized and minority groups, ensuring that they receive adequate protection. Policies should be aligned with international frameworks such as CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol, and SDG 5 to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination. The Kigali Declaration also calls for media organisations across Africa to adopt gender-sensitive policies that prevent violence and harassment and promote gender equity.
- Education and Training Programs: Continuous education and training programs for journalists, media professionals, and the public are critical and should be based on principles from the Beijing Declaration and CEDAW, with a focus on digital safety, awareness of legal protections, and strategies to counter online harassment.
- Fostering Newsroom Culture Change: A safe and supportive newsroom culture is essential. This can be achieved by implementing comprehensive safety protocols, offering support to those affected by online harassment, and encouraging a culture of zero tolerance towards violence.
- Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms: Establishing monitoring systems to track incidents of online harassment and violence against women journalists, coupled with feedback mechanisms, can help in improving policies and enforcement.
- Intersectionality Task Force: A dedicated task force that focuses on intersectionality can ensure that the unique needs of all women journalists, including those from minority and marginalized communities, are addressed in policy frameworks.

5.2 Collaborative Efforts to Address VAWG In Media

- **Partnerships Between Government and Media Organisations:** Collaboration between these entities can strengthen policy enforcement and create a unified front against online harassment. Such partnerships can lead to better resources, more consistent monitoring, and a greater commitment to addressing VAWG.
- **Collaboration with NGOs and Advocacy Groups:** NGOs and advocacy groups play a crucial role in raising awareness, providing support to victims, and pushing for legal reforms. Their involvement is essential for a comprehensive approach to combating VAWG in the media.
- **International Cooperation and Exchange of Best Practices:** Media organisations should cooperate internationally, guided by frameworks such as the Kigali Declaration and SDG 16, to exchange best practices in protecting women journalists from violence, especially in a borderless digital world.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Forums and Dialogue:** Regular forums that bring together stakeholders from different sectors can foster dialogue, enhance understanding, and lead to collaborative solutions to the problem of VAWG in the media.
- **Joint Research and Data Sharing Initiatives:** Collaborative research and data-sharing efforts can provide the evidence needed to inform policy decisions, identify trends, and track the effectiveness of interventions.
- **Legal Frameworks and Accountability:** Governments should strengthen existing laws to reflect new forms of VAWG and protect women journalists from harassment and violence, in line with the international human rights treaties and recommendations from UN specialised agencies such as UNESCO and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. These legal frameworks should also ensure the protection of freedom of expression and uphold women's rights in media settings. The justice system should be reformed to improve access to justice for survivors and punish perpetrators of VAWG.

5.3 Educational Approaches to Increase Public Awareness about VAWG in Media

- **Integrating Media Literacy into School Curricula:** Educating young people about media literacy and the impacts of online violence from an early age can foster a more informed and respectful online culture.
- **Enhancing Curriculum in Training Programs:** Journalism schools and training programs should integrate the Beijing Declaration's focus on gender equality and media literacy. Modules should address the safety of women journalists, strategies for handling online threats, and ethical considerations in reporting on gender-based violence.
- **Utilising social media for Outreach:** Social media platforms can be powerful tools for raising awareness about VAWG in media. Campaigns that engage influencers and public figures can amplify the message and reach a broader audience.
- **Hosting Community Workshops and Seminars:** Community-based education initiatives can help spread awareness at the grassroots level, making the fight against VAWG in media a collective effort.
- **Engaging Influencers and Public Figures:** These individuals can play a key role in raising awareness and influencing public opinion on the importance of protecting women journalists from online violence.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Public campaigns should align with SDG 5 and promote the principles outlined in the Kigali Declaration to challenge stereotypes, reduce violence against women in media, and foster a culture of respect and safety in both online and offline media environments.



6.0 Conclusion

This report highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of violence against women and girls in the Nigerian media sector. The findings reveal significant challenges in addressing this issue, including gaps in policy implementation, inadequate institutional support, and insufficient legal protections, particularly in the digital space.

Key areas of concern include:

- Inconsistent awareness and implementation of policies addressing VAWG in media
- Limited effectiveness of current institutional and governance structures
- Inadequate protection measures to address prevalent online harassment of women journalists
- Need for stronger and more specific legal frameworks to address online threats
- Lack of comprehensive and inclusive policies that consider intersectionality

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach involving policy development, education, collaboration between stakeholders, and strengthened enforcement mechanisms. Particular attention should be paid to online safety for women journalists and creating a more supportive and inclusive media environment.

However, the report also identifies several opportunities for improvement:

- Developing more comprehensive and inclusive policy frameworks
- Strengthening collaboration between government, media organisations, and civil society
- Enhancing public awareness through educational initiatives
- Improving enforcement mechanisms for existing policies
- Addressing cultural and religious barriers through sensitization and dialogue

The way forward necessitates sustained effort and commitment from all stakeholders - media organisations, government bodies, civil society, and the public. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, Nigeria can make significant strides towards creating a safer, more equitable media landscape for women and girls, ultimately contributing to broader societal progress in gender equality and women's rights.

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