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"A PLAYING FIELD WHERE PATRIARCHY PLAYS": Addressing Sexism in South African and Nigerian Newsrooms.

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This study uses in-depth interviews from journalists to examine gendered norms in newsrooms in South Africa and Nigeria. It incorporates the organizational and social system levels of gatekeeping to identify problematic work environments and influential cultural attitudes towards gender. Participants from both countries identified sexual abuse, sexual harassment, unfair job allocations, limited access to power, unfair pay, and overall unsafe work environments as significant problems. Nigerian participants stressed the influence of culture and religion, whereas South African participants also discussed race. Participants described varying degrees of organizational interventions and restitutions, but overall agreed organizations could do more. Cultural rape myths such as excusing the seriousness of sexual abuse, slut shaming, and victim blaming were more common in Nigerian participants. Solutions from participants mainly focused on promoting more women to managerial positions and newsroom training. However, many expressed the difficulties of eradicating sexism in journalism because of its pervasiveness in society.

Introduction

This study analysed gendered norms in newsrooms in South Africa and Nigeria, experienced sexual abuse, patterned responses of news organizations, and proposed solutions. It situates the findings within the organizational and social system levels of gatekeeping (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009) in order to connect how gender inequalities found in journalism are ultimately a bi-product of societal attitudes about gender—reinforced by news organizations. Such an exploration gives insight into why gender inequalities continue within the news industry, and importantly, why there isn't zero tolerance for gendered norms and sexual abuse by news organizations.

Gatekeeping theory was adapted to journalism by looking at how gatekeepers (originally a wire copy editor) whittle down possible news items in order to pass through the so-called gate to the audience (White, 1950). Four decades later, Shoemaker (1991) identified prominent forces in the gatekeeping process, which she labelled as the levels of analysis (individual, routines, organizational, social institutional, and social system). Later, Shoemaker and Reese (1996; 2014) introduced the hierarchy of influences model with similar forces. These forces impact the production and output of news, as well as determine newsroom environments. Studying these forces can involve connecting the process to the output (e.g. Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, and Wrigley, 2001). This has usefully identified gendered routines in gatekeeping and their consequences to news content (author). However, this study concentrates on the impact of these forces on the working environment of gatekeepers (Berkowitz, 1990). Importantly, it looks beyond the individuals and their routines to examine the powerful, yet often invisible, influence of culture. Organizations are responsible for creating and maintaining working environments, but it's often taken for granted that established journalistic norms are routed in societal beliefs and ideologies. Therefore, this study examines attitudes around gendered norms as an influence of

the social system on the news industry and concentrates on how they play out via news organizations.

Gendered norms in newsrooms are far reaching and affect pay scales, promotion, division of labour, access to power, news content, work environments, personal safety, etc. (Byerly, 2011a, 2013; "IWMF," 2013; Willnat and Weaver, 2014). Part of this mistreatment includes sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is: "The infliction of sexual contact upon a person by forcible compulsion" (Meriam-Webster.com). There are several terms used to describe various forms and degrees of sexual abuse: Sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual assault, lewdness, groping, locker room talk, unwanted advances, non-consensual sex acts, molestation, and so forth. It can encompass a spectrum of acts, including rape. For this study, sexual abuse refers to all forms of sexual violence and misconduct. This is not to imply that there aren't more severe forms of sexual abuse over others, but to rather emphatically state that all forms of sexual abuse are wrong and all must be eliminated. When reporting experiences, we detail specific acts in order to differentiate between types of sexual abuse.

As illustrated, despite advancements towards gender equality, the status quo continues to subjugate women. Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p.81) draw upon Gitlin (1980) to explain that media organizations reproduce a "…cohesive ideology as a unifying force" that "legitimates the social system structure…" Part of this cohesive ideology in relation to sexual abuse is what's known as rape culture. Rape culture describes the societal justifications for male violence, specifically sexual abuse (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, 1993). Rape culture disadvantages survivors by disparaging them while also protecting the accused (Weiss, 2009). This is done on various levels throughout public and private spheres and results in sexual abuse being severely underreported and rarely prosecuted with a prison sentence ("Facts and Figures," n.d.).

Rape culture continues to be analysed and measured through various topics of study, such as college campus environments (Giraldi and Monk-Turner, 2016; Ricci and Bergeron, 2019), the LGBTQ+ community (Johnson, Corbett-Hone, Gutekunst, and Grove, 2019), feminist pedagogy (Stern, 2018), film (Hahner and Varda, 2017), social media (Stubbs-Richardson, Rader, and Cosby, 2018), religion (Barnett, Sligar, and Wang, 2018), politics (Johnson, Rocchino, Wolf, Gutekunst, Paulvin, and Farrell, 2019), crime (O'Neal, 2017), and so forth. Rape culture also continues to be written and discussed in media and popular culture (e.g. Mahdawi, 2019; Sorensen, 2019; Taub, 2014). There is also research on rape culture in media content (Jordan, 2012; O'Hara, 2012). Given the current insidiousness of rape culture, it is worthy of analysis within the social system of gatekeeping. Particularly, when considering the prevalence of sexual abuse in newsrooms ("IWMF," 2013).

Rape culture is built on false ideas about sexual abuse called rape myths (Payne et al., 1999; Weiss, 2009). Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1999, p. 27) describe rape myths as "a complex set of cultural beliefs thought to support and perpetuate male sexual violence against women." Schulze, Koon-Magnin, and Bryan (2019, p. 13) note that rape myths "undermine victim credibility and lesson offender culpability." Rape myths are consequently important to study because the more apparent they are in cultural attitudes, the more likely sexual abuse is tolerated in society. Some common myths include survivors are lying, secretly wanted it, led on the accused, wanted attention, and so forth (Payne et al., 1999). The scenario of a male perpetrator and female victim is the most common form of sexual assault; however, scholars have expanded rape myths to also include male victims (Walfield, 2018) and LGBTQ+ identities (Schulze et al., 2019). Rape myths serve to justify rape culture and dismiss the seriousness of sexual abuse, and are therefore commonly used as measurements to understand rape culture in

various contexts. This study presents participants' unsolicited engagement with rape myths when discussing gendered norms and sexual abuse in newsrooms.

Newsrooms around the world would benefit from such inquiry. This study focuses on Nigeria and South Africa. These countries represent different geographical areas of Africa and have different socio-political histories and current systems. They also rank quite differently in terms of gender equality. According to the Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2018), Nigeria ranks 133rd and South Africa 19th. Nevertheless, both countries struggle with gender-based violence, including femicide (Abrahams, Mathews, Martin, et al., 2013; Chika, 2012). In general, many African countries follow gendered norms, which subjugate women (Chisango, Mayekiso, and Thomae, 2015; Hellweg, 2015; Mazrui, 1993). Research is limited in these countries in regards to gendered norms in newsrooms, but academics have found an exclusion of women's voices (Steeves and Awino, 2015). Men dominate newsrooms, especially in managerial and ownership positions (Enwefah, 2016; South African National Editors' Forum, 2018). This study makes an important contribution to journalism research by 1) looking outside a Western context, and 2) analysing experiences of gendered norms and sexual abuse in newsrooms.

The literature review begins by examining the organizational level of gatekeeping and the gendered norms commonly found within news organizations. It then reviews the social system and societal attitudes towards sexual abuse via rape culture. The findings present the output of the organizational and social system levels in the South African and Nigerian contexts through a thematic analysis of in-depth interviews of journalists ($N = 28$). Thematic analysis is a qualitative methodology that focuses on developing codes into central themes found in data (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, 2012). It is utilized in this study to identify patterns found in newsrooms as described by the participants. Possible solutions are consequently proposed.

The Organizational Level of Gatekeeping

News organizations operate on a hierarchy, which means most gatekeepers are obligated to adhere to the boundaries set in place by higher management (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Although journalistic routines are similar throughout media systems, how those routines are implemented and maintained differ depending on the organization (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). News organizations build identities through the collective work of their employees (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). Furthermore, news organizations are generally effective in ensuring employees follow the rules—even when the employees don't necessarily agree with the rules (Gade and Perry, 2003; Weaver, Willnat, and Wilhoit, 2019). Below outlines how organizational boundaries impact women in general, and then focuses on South Africa and Nigeria.

Gendered Norms in Newsrooms

Research on gendered norms in journalism spans many countries and many types of journalism. It includes varying degrees of inequalities that range from unfair newsroom practices to abusive working environments (North, 2016, "IWMF," 2013). For instance, Wang (2016) found women journalists in China were judged on their appearances and expected to fulfil prescribed norms of beauty for work. In Korea, women journalists are stereotyped as doing a "man's" job and therefore often thought of as only capable of covering soft news beats (Kim, 2006). Fadnis (2018) notes that journalists in India generally acknowledge sexism as a problem, but both men and women continue uphold patriarchal ideals, which subordinate women to secondary jobs.

Women working in sports journalism are commonly labelled as not assertive or knowledgeable (Etling and Young, 2007). Political journalism has consistently excluded women journalists and perspectives (North, 2014; Zeldes and Fico, 2010; Zeldes, Fico, and Diddi, 2012).

Perhaps, the most pernicious output of gendered norms is sexual abuse. This is not to imply that men cannot experience sexual abuse. All participants in this study were asked if they had experienced sexual abuse. Several studies have found sexual abuse a problem in the newsroom. For instance, over 50% of women in an Australian study reported experienced newsroom sexual harassment (North, 2016). In conflict zones research, 68% of women and 8% of men reported experienced sexual harassment (Harris, Mosdell, and Griffiths, 2016). What's more, two thirds of women indicated experienced newsroom harassment or abuse in a joint study from The International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) and The International News Safety Institute ("IWMF," 2013). Another joint study from IWMF and Troll-Busters.com shows the same percentage of women get harassed online (Ferrier and Munoz, 2018).

South Africa

Gender equality has improved in South Africa's news industry, especially in terms of promotion. For instance, a recent study of major news outlets around the world showed that 47% of top editors in South Africa were women (Andi, Selva, and Nielsen, 2020). A global report by IWMF showed that most media organizations in South Africa have gender equality and anti-sexual abuse policies (Byerly, 2011b). But there are continued issues, such as a gender pay gap and lack of access to power (Byerly, 2011b; Geertsema, 2008; Zuiderveld, 2014). Specifically, women journalists identify themselves as having less power in the newsroom compared to men (Rodny-Gumede, 2015). Furthermore, women are expected to fulfil traditional gender roles and be submissive to male authority (Kalichman et al., 2005; Shefer et al., 2008). A report by the South African National Editors' Forum (South African National Editors' Forum, 2018) indicated that women continue to face the threat of sexual harassment, despite overall improvements in the industry. A 2018 commission of inquiry that investigated the prevalence of sexual harassment at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (2018) revealed senior managers colluded to cover up cases and protect alleged perpetrators (Smit, 2018).

In a society fraught with racial bias, black women are doubly disenfranchised based on race and gender (Kehler, 2001; Motaung, Bussin, and Joseph, 2017). Statistics also indicate the rate of violence against women in South Africa is significantly high compared to other countries (Abrahams et al., 2013; Sibanda-Moyo, Khonje and Brobbey, 2017). In one study, more than 40% of female respondents reported having experienced at least one sexual assault experience (Kalichman et al., 2005). Although the status of women has improved significantly in post-apartheid South Africa, women's gains have elicited resistance from some men (Shefer et al., 2008; Dworkin, Colvin, Hatcher, and Peacock, 2012).

Nigeria

The news industry in Nigeria is still male dominated, especially in managerial positions (Byerly, 2011b; Enwefah, 2016). One of the few studies on gendered norms in Nigerian newsrooms shows that 66% of women surveyed indicated they experienced sexual harassment (Unaegbu, 2017). The IWMF global report showed that only 13% of news organizations had policies on gender equality and anti-sexual harassment (Byerly, 2011b).

Overall, Nigeria is classified as having "very high" discrimination against women on multiple fronts ("UNDP," 2016, p. 90). Firstly, previous studies show women are underrepresented in the Nigerian civil service, university employment, business leadership, educational attainment, and politics (Aderinto, 2001; Olufemi and David, 2011; Samuel and Segun, 2012; Anele, 2010; Orji, Oriji, and Agbanyim, 2018). Sexual abuse against women is also highly prevalent in Nigeria (Iliyasu, Abubakar, Alivu, et al., 2011; Antai, 2011; Muoghalu, 2012; Ezechi et al., 2016). The majority of sexual abuse incidents go unreported and perpetrators are rarely punished even in reported cases (Muoghalu, 2012). The subordination of women in Nigerian society has been attributed to religious and cultural influences (Agbalajobi, 2010), which are defended by men and women (Aderinto, 2001; Antai, 2011).

To build on existing research on gendered norms in newsrooms in the sampled countries, the first step for the researchers was to understand participants' experiences and how news organizations generally respond:

RQ1: To what extent are gendered norms experienced in South African and Nigerian newsrooms as described by the participants?

RQ2: How did the participants' employers respond to their reported experiences?

The Social System Level of Gatekeeping

News industries operate within greater macro systems defined by culture and ideology that not only influence the gatekeeping process, but also characterize newsroom norms (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Moreover, since media communicators transmit familiar cultural themes with which audiences resonate (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014), it is reasonable to expect that the working environments of media communicators, also reflect similar cultural themes. Accordingly, previous macro level research often connects political, economic, and ideological societal influences to media practices. For instance, Hallin and Mancini's (2004) work on media systems in Western contexts. Missing from social system studies is connecting the research that illustrates gendered, racial, and other inequalities to larger cultural contexts within societies. While, there is conflicting research on how much individual characteristics such as gender influence the gatekeeping process (Hanitzsch and Hanusch, 2012; Kim, 2010; Shoemaker et al., 2001), what is often overlooked is how much cultural attitudes about gender impact newsroom work environments, individuals in newsrooms, the gatekeeping process, and finally newsroom content.

Rape Culture

In the mid to latter part of the 20th century, scholars began to identify rape culture and its embedded rape myths. An important part of the research was to recognize that societal structures often fail to adequately identify rape and address its seriousness and commonality. Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1974) explained rape is not a sexual act but rather a "power trip—an act of aggression and an act of contempt…" (p.20). Men mostly seek that power, often targeting women, but also targeting other men (Buchwald et al., 1993). Rape culture is consequently the acceptance of male aggression as inevitable and justifiable (Buchwald et al., 1993). There are inconsistencies of rape culture, which can be confusing. On one hand, rape is considered a vile

crime, second only to murder; on the other hand, rape convictions are extremely low and many survivors never report out of fear of retribution, shaming, and further victimization (Harding, 2015).

Rape myths help explain rape culture because very few people in rape culture societies outright advocate for sexual abuse; they do however, rely on harmful stereotypes and lies about how sexual abuse happens, which excuses most cases of sexual abuse. Part of Schwendinger and Schwendinger's (1974) work identified rape myths such as: Rape cannot happen to healthy women (and men) because they are able to defend themselves, women ask for it by their dress and words, and even occupation if a sex worker, and men have uncontrollable passions, which can confuse consensual sex and rape. Burt (1980) later added to these myths with "women cry rape only when they've been jilted or have something to cover up," "only bad girls get raped," and "rapists are sex-starved, insane, or both" (p. 217). In the 90s, Payne et al. (1999) developed the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, which was similar to previous iterations of rape myths. They included she's lying, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really rape, she asked for it, she wanted it, rape is a deviant event, and rape is a trivial event (Payne et al., 1999). Examples of rape myths for male victims are that men cannot be raped, men can defend themselves, men aren't affected by rape, male rape only happens in prison, and the victim deserved it (Turchik and Edward, 2012). The Identity Inclusive Sexual Assault Myth Scale accounts for false ideas about LGBTQ+ victims and perpetrators, and includes myths such as masculine presenting lesbians cannot be raped by women (Schulze et al., 2019).

Patterns of rape myth acceptance within rape culture continue today. Most cases of sexual abuse are dismissed because of the false narrative that "real" rape rarely happens (Jones, Grear, Fenton et al., 2011). Rape culture is also reflected in news coverage (e.g. Jordan, 2012). Sexual abuse cases are often downplayed (O'Hara, 2012), dismissed (Romaniuk, 2015), or presented as rare events (Pennington and Birthisel, 2016). Even within the #metoo movement, exposing sexual abuse cases like Harvey Weinstein (e.g. Farrow, 2017) has not led to concretely challenging rape culture present in news coverage (authors).

Consequently, this study seeks to understand if participants enact rape myths to explain the current state of gendered norms in journalism by asking:

RQ3: To what extent do the sampled participants engage in rape myths when describing newsroom sexism?

This question doesn't assume all participants will engage in rape myths, but rather seeks to understand if they do engage in rape myths, and how. Finally, this study asks if participants have ideas on how to improve newsroom sexism:

RQ4: What are the proposed solutions by the participants to address gendered norms in newsrooms?

Method

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews extend beyond regular conversations (Wengraf, 2001) to story tell, explain, gather information, validate, and recall the past (Lindloff and Taylor, 2011). Semi-structured

interviews were used for this study to promote focused interactive data collection with participants (Ritchie, 2003). This research project follows an initial survey conducted by the researchers on sexual harassment in newsrooms wherein participants identified systemic issues through open and closed questions. The researchers prepared questions for the in-depth interviews based on issues highlighted in the survey such as unfair pay, unfair promotion, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse. The interviews also included follow up questions to responses and any additional comments from the participants.

Participant Selection

Once ethical approval was granted, the second researcher began to contact journalists in the sampled countries with requests to participate in in-depth interviews. Participants were approached individually via email, SMS, Whatsapp, and their social media accounts. Snowballing (Rosemarie, Mary, and Jackie, 204) was also used via the recommendations of the participants. All potential participants were provided with an information sheet about the study, contact information of the researchers, guarantees of confidentiality through use of a pseudonym, and careful care of the collected data. Once participants granted consent, interviews were conducted on the phone or via skype.

In total, 28 interviews were conducted comprising of 15 participants in Nigeria, and 13 in South Africa. Of these, 22 participants were female and 6 were male. Interviews were recorded using an audio recorder, and lasted between 20-60 minutes, with an average of 29 minutes. Table 1 provides more details about the profile of research participants.

[Table 1 near here]

Thematic Analysis

Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012) in order to report the findings. Cartwright (2020) describes four basic stages for conducting a thematic analysis: immersion in the data, generating initial codes, developing themes by combing and linking the relevant codes, and finally reviewing the themes. Stage one required transcribing the interviews and reading the transcripts line by line. Gibson and Brown (2009) state that when conducting a thematic analysis researchers are examining commonality, differences, and relationships. The researchers independently examined the data during stage two in order to pool together patterned answers as codes. They also focused on differences between and within countries. Additionally, they looked for relationships between the codes according to the research questions. The initial results were then compared and discussed.

Once satisfied, stage three involved developing themes. A theme can be defined as, "recognizable configuration of meanings which co-occur in a way that is meaningful and systematic rather than random and arbitrary" (Willig, 2013, p. 59). Braun and Clarke (2006) further note that theme development occurs in relation to the research question posed. Once the broad themes were identified, the researchers then further discussed how to organize the themes according to the research questions. The findings are reported below. The researchers satisfied stage four by carefully comparing and reviewing their results before writing the findings.

Findings

Gendered Norms are Common in Newsrooms

RQ1 asked to what extent respondents experienced gendered norms at work. All but two participants (1 male from Nigeria and 1 female from South Africa) reported experiencing or witnessing gendered norms. The experiences reported included name calling, sexual harassment, unfair beat assignments, lack of women in supervisory positions, sexual assault, rape, lack of opportunities to voice opinions and ideas, belittlement of opinions when voiced, unfair pay, unfair promotion, and being in increased danger when working in the field. This is consistent with previous research (Byerly, 2011b) and indicates the need for journalism research to emphasize these various inequalities.

While the majority of female participants recounted that their worst experiences happened as interns or during the early stages of their career, accumulating years of work did not appear to insulate women from continuing to face inequalities. Overall, participants described the level of experienced gendered norms as fluctuating according to whether or not women were in managerial positions—decreasing when more women were in senior positions. This indicates the levels of gatekeeping aren't mutually exclusive, but are rather interactional (Chin-Fook & Simmonds, 2013).

Nigeria

In Nigeria, all but one of the participants described working in newsrooms where supervisory and management positions are male dominated. In total, 13 of the 15 participants shared experiences of working in newsrooms where women are not only under-represented, they are also denied access to specific news beats, assignments, promotions and training opportunities, and not being taken seriously. News manager Elizabeth summarized the situation by stating, "I come from a patriarchal society and so obviously you find that the men are always in charge and always leading." More specifically, assistant editor Emilia noted that certain prestigious beats completely shut out women: "I have been in this organization for about 11 years. I have never seen a woman on the politics desk."

Sexual harassment was also a problem—experienced by two-thirds of the participants. For instance, sub-editor Amanda stated male colleagues objectify her with statements such as, "Your husband is enjoying. You look really hot." Similarly, journalist David notes, "I have heard people talk dirty about other people—objectifying. Like 'that girl, wow, she has a big butt. She looks sexy.'" Retribution was also a possibility for those who did not respond positively to being sexually harassed. Emilia described a female colleague whose male news editor refused to publish her stories after she declined his sexual advances. When the female colleague reported the situation to a managing editor, the man was relocated to another desk, but not fired.

In terms of sexual assault, control editor Margaret recalled a female colleague being raped by a male colleague outside the newsroom. The police did not pursue the case, but the man was fired. Commonly, male colleagues slap women's butts or attempt to touch their breasts. Magdalena explained, "…colleague to colleague. Like hitting each other's bum bum –I have witnessed one or two before. Trying to touch breasts…"

Nine Nigerian participants indicated that their status in the newsroom was inked to cultural and religious attitudes. Cultural notions were mostly demonstrated in assumptions of women belonging in domestic spaces, women being required to be under male authority and

expected to submit to older male colleagues. Sub-editor Amanda described previously working in a newsroom that expected staff to adhere to traditional norms such as addressing older colleagues as 'Sir', 'Ma', 'Uncle' or 'Aunty'. They also had to express respect by not looking "elders in the eye." Journalist Agnes pointed out how some male colleagues believed women shouldn't be working outside the home at all: "A colleague said to me directly that my place is in the kitchen, not in the office."

Half of participants noted their experiences had an impact on psychological wellbeing, their career growth, and their ability to work effectively. Some female journalists noted they also operate in fear of abusive male supervisors and colleagues: "There are people who have complained that it is because they have refused to date or compromise that they are being treated in a certain manner," said Elizabeth. One result of the situation is to leave: "I resigned where I was working last month. I was an online editor. While I was there I never really got respect. They would look down on me when I made decisions." said Magdalena.

South Africa

In South Africa, six of the 13 participants reported working in news environments that have a significant number of women in supervisory positions, which they believed decreased gendered norms. An important way that South African participants differ from Nigerian participants is the historical and contemporary impact of race, which affects all parts of society. Specifically, the intersection of race and gender as editor Camilla states: "I think in South Africa the fight against racism has taken precedence over the fight against sexism because racism affects men. So black women remain at the bottom of the pile pretty much."

Despite the more positive situation when compared to Nigeria, the South African participants still described an environment that was similar to Nigerian newsrooms. This included women being denied beat assignments and senior positions. Also, women indicated their contributions were undervalued and unrewarded. Moreover, even though participants noted women in managerial positions, rising to the top was still an exception rather than the rule: "When you look at the newsroom—most of the reporters are women. But when you go up to the management position, you only have one woman in management. So what happens?" Journalist Abigail goes on to explain that many women leave because they feel stuck, "What I have realized is that most women then leave the profession after a few years because they realize there is no career progression here."

Beat assignment was once again gendered—men assigned to hard news and women assigned more lifestyle and soft news stories. Similar to the politics beat in Nigerian newsrooms, senior political reporter Dorothy revealed it is challenging to be the only woman on the political team:

> You will make a suggestion and people will ignore and forget. And then a man will make the same suggestion and it will be like people are hearing it for the first time. There is a lot of credibility when a man says it I suppose…

Once again sexual harassment and sexual abuse were commonly experienced or witnessed—leading some to endure severe strain. Esther described how she decided to freelance after eight years of being sexually abused by a male colleague: "I had very high blood pressure. I had two miscarriages. That tells you it was just too much. The best decision for me was just to resign. That was the best decision I could make for myself." Part of the sexual misconduct described included groping younger female colleagues:

There was an afternoon male radio presenter who would just walk past you, but his hand always happened to brush against your breast. The newsroom was essentially being run by interns, and he was doing the same thing to everybody else. (editor Patricia)

Describing the situation, the greater context of the metoo movement was referenced to both relate to the barrage of stories being uncovered, but to also set the benchmark that the situation could be worse: "On a scale of one to 10 in terms of extremity, I would say it was three to four-ish. It wasn't over the top like your Harvey Weinstein-type of things, but it was so distressing," noted journalist Felicity. The distressing actions described by participants included objectification such as: "They would say, 'You look like I could f*ck you, girl'. They would talk dirty" (Dorothy).

Overall, South African participants appeared to have a solid understanding of gendered norms and the different ways they manifest in the newsroom, as well as their impact on the work environment. They also generally shared nuanced arguments that captured how other elements such as societal patriarchy and South Africa's long history with apartheid and racism relate to their experiences at work. The biggest impact was a general sense of frustration among female workers who feel unwelcome, disrespected, and excluded in a male dominated news environment.

Mixed Responses from News Organizations

RQ2 asked how news organizations responded to gender inequalities in newsrooms. When asked about reporting, nine participants in Nigeria, who had experienced or witnessed sexual abuse, noted complaints had been filed with either HR officers or company management. However, five participants chose not to report out of fear of retaliation: "They will start calling you names. That you are arrogant. You are troublesome. You are a liar. They can label you all sorts of things because you don't have proof" (Magdalena). Journalist Rebecca adds, "There is a culture of silence. Nobody reports. You don't want to be in the black book of anybody when you are at the reportorial level." More than half of Nigerian participants who either reported or were aware of reported cases of sexual abuse noted that the news organization took some punitive action against offenders. Actions ranged from dismissals, suspensions and described warnings.

Similarly, South African participants also described fear of retribution if they reported their experiences. They expressed fear that reporting would make their work environments more hostile and cause them to be subjected to ridicule or even cost them their jobs. Abigail explains, "I never reported to HR or my line manager because what I thought was, 'anyway even our line manger likes to make sexist jokes, very uncomfortable jokes'. So even if I reported, nothing much would come out of it."

Overall, seven South African participants described cases of sexual abuse that had been officially reported to either HR or management. Of these, three participants described some form of action was taken by the organisation ranging from dismal to sexual harassment seminars. The overall results indicate organizations do take some action but don't prioritize action or creating work environments wherein staff feel comfortable reporting.

Rape Myths As Social System Ideology in Newsrooms

RQ3 asked if rape myths were engaged in when participants discussed sexual abuse and gendered norms in newsrooms. Though participants from both countries shared similar

experiences, how they discussed the issue of sexual abuse varied. Nigerian participants were more prone to downplaying the problem, excusing it to the inevitable nature of men, and victim blaming. South African participants on the other hand, showed more awareness to the insidiousness of rape culture and addressed rape myths directly.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, nine participants expressed attitudes of victim blaming and believed the responsibility to avoid sexual abuse was on women.

> My personal reasoning is that sometime our behaviour, our dressing, our disposition to people also triggers some of this kind of actions. On the side of us women, we should be conscious of it knowing full that we are opposite sexes. That is one way that it could be controlled…(content editor Rachel)

Similarly, Margaret engaged in the myth that if sexual abuse happens, the victim secretly wanted it to happen: "What I always advise is that it takes two. If you like him, that means it's between the both of you, its two adults. But if you don't want, nobody can coerce you into doing what you don't want."

There was also an attitude that women determine their own worthiness of whether their news organization should address experienced sexual abuse by how they act. Emilia stated that a case could only be made for victims who were perceived as valuable, "You cannot expect if you are not hardworking, if you are not resourceful, if you haven't covered your end to do all the things that you ought to do as a journalist practising professionally." Similarly, Elizabeth adds: "…I would say that women should be properly educated. Women should know what to do. Women should be able to stand up to whatever challenges." Additionally, the value of preventing sexual abuse was justified through women's relationships with men rather than having the right to personal safety:

> You are talking to a group of men and you are giving examples with: 'You want your daughter to do this. You want your daughter to be this way. This is somebody else's daughter'. So you are getting them to be in the situation themselves. I think that will also change their perspectives. (Amanda)

More positively, four of the Nigerian participants did acknowledge rape culture and the associated rape myths and gendered norms. The focus was particularly on how sexual abuse was covered by the journalists—paying attention to the importance of language, "We tend to as much as possible try to control our language, so we don't support the alleged rapist and at the same time we also don't shame the alleged victim" (journalist Gabriel). Two participants described the issue of being in a patriarchal society: "It's basically built on patriarchy. So women are just tossed around, and not just in the newsroom…" (journalist Deborah).

South Africa

Two of the participants in South Africa engaged in rape myths, which were based on how strong women aren't targets and the stereotype that women are promoted in the workplace based on their sexual behaviour. For instance, journalist Robert stated, "It hasn't affected anyone in our newsroom because the ladies I work with are very strong. " Esther believed that it was common for women to accept being sexually harassed and engage is sexual acts in order to move ahead professionally: "…they can go on dates with the managers for them to get promotions, they can

go to hotels and sleep around with them and the next thing you hear someone has been promoted."

On the other hand, eight participants called out the issue of rape culture, specifically noting the issue of male privilege: "Sometimes they feel entitled. It's the way they grew up. It's the whole patriarchy thing…But no, it shouldn't be like that. How you were raised shouldn't affect me as a woman" (Dorothy).

Proposed Solutions for News Organizations

When asked for potential solutions, all participants were able to generate ideas. As noted above, the majority of Nigerian participants put the responsibility on women to be educated, act a specific way, and speak out: "We should be also conscious of what we do, our dressing, the way we talk, things we do that could make people make unnecessary advances…" (Rachel). Conversely, only two participants specifically stated a need for male colleagues to change, as Agnes states, "Men need to be talked to, not just women. Men need to be talked to from time to time irrespective of age and I think they need to start it early." Seven of the Nigerian participants stated better awareness training was needed, and two noted human resources departments needed to act more.

Notably, while two Nigerian participants suggested promoting more women to managerial positions, seven South African participants believed having gender parity in power would decrease sexism in newsrooms: "Have more women in senior positions. To me that's it. The people who make the rules and the people break the rules are all men. So what do you do?" (Patricia).

Also in South Africa, ten of the participants focused on how gender inequality was a societal problem and consequently, it can't be irradiated until it is also addressed in society: "It's not something that I can imagine would happen anytime soon because we come from a macho society" (journalist Florence). Furthermore, Robert stated that though South Africa has gender equality laws, which may hold people and organizations responsible for sexist acts, regulations don't fundamentally change people: "The laws don't change people's attitudes. So someone might not harass you at work, but it won't change him into not being sexist." One solution of changing society for South African participants was to shift responsibility to men: "What can be done is we need more men to be making a change in their circles. Its always funny how the pressure is put on us" (journalist Khadija).

Discussion

This study included an analysis of in-depth interviews of journalists in Nigeria ($n = 15$) and South Africa ($n = 13$). The aim of the study was to examine the influence of organizational and social system level forces (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) on gendered norms. The organizational level is important to consider because news organizations are ultimately responsible for correcting societal gendered norms in the newsroom rather than passively and/or actively allowing them to be reinforced. The social system level is also important because it explains societal attitudes about gender and their associated consequences to gatekeepers. In relation to the social system, this study specifically observed rape culture (Harding, 2015; Buchwald et al., 1993) attitudes of the participants via rape myths (Jones et al., 2011; Payne et al., 1999; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1974).

Previous research shows that gendered norms are ubiquitous in newsrooms around the world (Byerly, 2011a; 2013; Fadnis, 2018; Kim, 2006; Lachover, 2005; "IWMF," 2013; Wang, 2016; Willnat and Weaver, 2014). This was observed in this study. The majority of participants from both countries acknowledged the pervasiveness of gendered norms, which included gender discrimination in relation to access to power, beat assignment, pay, promotion, personal safety, and so forth. Groping, objectification, and sexual advances were commonplace, especially for younger women and interns. One difference between the countries was management. Nigerian participants worked in newsrooms with far fewer women in managerial roles than South African participants. South African participants expressed that more women as managers positively impacted the newsroom in terms of atmosphere and assigned roles.

These results show that newsrooms operate in tandem with society. Nigeria ranks lower than South Africa in terms of gender equality (UNDP, 2016; World Economic Forum, 2018). Yet, both countries have reported issues in and outside the newsroom (Abrahams et al., 2013; Aderinto, 2001; Enwefah, 2016; Geertsema, 2008; Rodny-Gumede, 2015; Unaegbu, 2017; Zuiderveld, 2014). Consequently, newsrooms serve as extensions of society in subjugating women and reinforcing heteronormative perceptions of women and men. Nevertheless, just as previous studies show that organizations can effectively implement boundaries in the workplace (Gade and Perry, 2003), organizations can improve the status of women if motivated. For instance, the initiative to increase women in managerial roles in South Africa has had some positive results for the participants of this study (Andi et al., 2020; Byerly, 2011b; "SANEF," 2018).

News organizations must genuinely prioritize gender equality initiatives (not just pay lip service), rather than relying on government policies or bottom up progression from employees alone. Participants noted initiatives should include fair promotion and representation practices, equal access to management, more specific anti-discrimination policies in human resources departments, and a conscientious effort to delineate from cultural norms. Other actions should entail fair pay scales, gender parity by beats, and zero-tolerance policies for sexual abuse (Byerly, 2011b; Ferrier and Munoz, 2018). This includes implementing reporting mechanisms that victims feel confident in utilizing. For instance, even though South African media organizations have significantly more gender equality and anti-sexual harassment policies than in Nigeria (Byerly, 2011b); participants from both countries stated not feeling comfortable in reporting their experiences.

As noted by the participants, the social system level influences the organizational level of gatekeeping because gender perceptions and performances are rooted in culture. This study concentrated on how rape myths continue to excuse or downplay sexual abuse commonly found in newsrooms ("IWMF," 2013). These did manifest, but so did general cultural influences, which many participants identified were the reason for gender inequality and the barriers from correcting it. For instance, just as Ogunyemi (2000) linked cultural attitudes in Nigeria to male dominance and strict gendered roles, female participants were expected to submit to male elders and faced being told they only belonged in domestic spaces. In South Africa, participants also acknowledged the importance of race, especially the intersection of race and gender. These findings illustrate the need for more journalism studies to include the influence of culture in the newsroom and on journalists. The "cohesive ideology" (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014) commonly found in news organizations in these contexts appears to justify gendered norms. On an individual level, gatekeepers can perform similar routines regardless of gender (Hanitzsch and Hanusch, 2012; Shoemaker et al., 2001—again mixed results, see also Kim, 2010), since

education, training, and newsroom environments contribute to standardizing media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This research however, doesn't acknowledge the varied experiences of gatekeepers while performing these routines, which are often based on individual characteristics such as gender, race, sexuality, and so forth. This failure is often not noticed, ignored, or downplayed because organizations are acting in accordance with societal expectations.

Part of the social system influence on participants included identifying and engaging in rape myths (Jones et al., 2011; Payne et al., 1999; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1974). Several rape myths have been tested over the years, and adapted depending on the survivor/perpetrator's gender and sexuality. In this study, the participants experiencing or witnessing sexual abuse were women who identified the perpetrator as male. The rape myths engaged in were consistent with Payne et al. (1999) and others (Burt, 1980; Schwendinger and Schwendinger) who base their myths on this scenario. As an aside, even though the men in this study didn't report experiencing sexual abuse, only two of them acknowledged men could also be sexually abused. Perceiving that men can't be sexually abused is a common myth for men (Turchick and Edward, 2012).

Analysing how participants engaged in rape myths deviated greatly between South Africa and Nigeria. Nigerian participants—women and men—victim blamed, excused the severity of the problem, explained women sought such attention for professional advancement, and believed men's nature is to act aggressively and women's nature is to tempt men. Notably, strength as a safeguard against sexual abuse (Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1974) was mentioned by Nigerian and the two South African participants who engaged in rape myths—extending the myth to also include those who worked hard at their job were more worthy of protection and justice. The prevalence of these myths is problematic to newsrooms. It makes reporting sexual abuse difficult because survivors fear being doubted or even retaliation (Schulze et al., 2019). It also downplays the seriousness of sexual abuse and takes away responsibility from organizations to prevent and attach consequences to sexual abuse. Ample research shows that rape culture exists in multiple contexts (Barnett et al., 2018; Giraldi and Monk-Turner, 2016; Johnson et al., 2019; O'Neil, 2017) and within the news industry (Jordan, 2012; O'Hara, 2012). By identifying it in this study, we show the importance of the social system in journalism, and the need for organizations to implement better workplace policies against sexual abuse that are not based on false ideas about sexual abuse perpetrated by rape myths.

Limitations and Future Research

Like many qualitative studies, the sample size for this study is smaller than most quantitative studies. It is also limited in its focus on only two countries. Given the size and established media industries, we believe South Africa and Nigeria worthy of in-depth analysis. Future research should extend to other countries. It is also a limitation to rely on snowballing for data gathering. Since this was a difficult to reach population, and there aren't contact records of journalists in both countries, snowballing was critical to this study. Future research can build on this sample. Focusing on managers and those in leadership positions would also provide further understanding to top-down attitudes in newsrooms. Future research should also include men who have experienced sexual abuse in the newsroom. It is difficult to find male journalists to discuss

topics of gender and sexual abuse; however, it is necessary to understand the full scope of sexual abuse in newsrooms. Finally, more investigation into race and ethnicity is also needed.

Conclusion

Extending research to include both what is happening in newsrooms and the attitudes towards this issue via rape myths is critical in eliminating gender inequalities in newsrooms. It may not be possible to totally separate news organizations from greater social systems (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014); moreover, as evidenced here, attitudes and outcomes were aligned between the South African and Nigerian participants. There is an overall need for greater understanding within newsrooms about rape culture and rape myths in order to better identify gendered norms. This study posits that organizations are responsible for disentangling from the gendered norms that marginalize women in public spheres in order to create better working environments. The failure to do so is not from a lack of ability or resources, but rather a lack of priority since organizations can and do effectively set workplace boundaries (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014).

This study contributes to gatekeeping and general journalism research by identifying how cohesive ideology that unifies newsrooms (Gitlin, 1980) is highly influenced by societal norms that are often overlooked or downplayed in favor of emphasizing journalistic routines. Gendered norms dictate the outcome of daily news reporting and the newsroom environments in which news personnel work. By shifting from research that is highly focused on the first and second levels of gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) to including the often invisible forces that continue to shape journalism, scholars can better identify why sexism and other inequalities haven't yet been eradicated from the news industry.

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Table 1. In-Depth Interview Participants.

Pseudonym	Gender	Job Title	Country	Years of Experience	Race/ Ethnicity
Robert	Male	Journalist	South Africa	2.5	Black
Lisa	Female	Journalist	South Africa	1.5	Black
Felicity	Female	Journalist	South Africa	5	Black
Esther	Female	Freelancer	South Africa	17	Black
Abigail	Female	Journalist	South Africa	11	Black
Khadija	Female	Journalist	South Africa	4	Black
Camilla	Female	Editor	South Africa	20	White
Andrew	Male	Editor	South Africa	27	White
Katherine	Female	Multimedia Journalist	South Africa	8	Black
Patricia	Female	Editor	South Africa	11	Black
Annabelle	Female	Editor	South Africa	14	Black
Dorothy	Female	Snr Reporter	South Africa	5	Black
Florence	Female	*Snr Journalist*	South Africa	5	Black
Amanda	Female	Sub-Editor	Nigeria	15	Urhobo
Emilia	Female	Ass. Editor	Nigeria	11	N/A*
Rachel	Female	Content Editor	Nigeria	11	N/A

Margaret	Female	Control Editor	Nigeria	26	N/A
Elizabeth	Female	News Manager	Nigeria	20	N/A
Agnes	Female	Journalist	Nigeria	13	N/A
Magdalena	Female	Media Owner	Nigeria	9	N/A
David	Male	Journalist	Nigeria	3	Hausa
Gabriel	Male	Snr Journalist	Nigeria	6	N/A
Leonard	Male	Content Editor	Nigeria	4	Yoruba
Maureen	Female	Snr Journalist	Nigeria	10	N/A
Helena	Female	*Head of Digital*	Nigeria	13	N/A
Deborah	Female	Journalist	Nigeria	2	Yoruba
Edgar	Male	*Journalist*	Nigeria	5	Yoruba
Rebecca	Female	Multimedia Journalist	Nigeria	10	N/A