Media Ownership and Marital Status as Factors for Career Change in Communication Organization

Peter O. Awofadeju, PhD; Omowumi B. Olaseinde-Fayomi and Bolanle Olubusayo Fasaanu
Department of Mass Communication, Achievers University

Abstract

The upsurge in career switch to non-communication related jobs by journalism professionals in Nigeria is a concern to all stakeholders. Literature attributed the causes of this problem to job/home workload of married women and media ownership influences on journalism professionals. The study adopted qualitative research design using in-depth interview method. The population of the study was 240 journalism professionals in three selected media organisations. Data were collected from six professional journalists. Interview guide was used as instrument for data collection. The data collected were analysed thematically. Findings showed that media ownership influence led to career switch intention among journalism professionals. The study concluded that there were predictors of career switch intention among journalism professionals in Nigeria. The study recommended that mass media owners should introduce measures that will motivate journalists to remain in the profession and married women to desire the job rather than switching to another career.

Keywords: *Media Ownership, Marital Status, Career Change, Organization*

Introduction

Journalism positions in Nigeria usually require the academic qualification of at least Diploma in Mass Communication or Journalism, while some employers require higher academic qualifications such as Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, master's degree or several years of experience. Graduates of mass communication in Nigeria have however been observed to be changing careers to non-communication related jobs in recent times and this has been a source of concern to communication scholars. This fact was alluded to by Ewuola and Awofadeju (2019) when they noted that "majority of mass communication graduates change to non-communication related jobs". Not only are scholars and trainers debating the desirability of graduates to follow journalism as a career, but they are equally questioning the future of journalism itself and the promises it holds for its teeming graduates. If events in Nigeria's journalism sector are anything to go by, where journalists work for months without collecting salary, where media

houses are struggling under an excruciating economic condition as well as unfavourable work environment, journalism faces a not-so-exciting future.

The issue of career switch intention among journalism professionals can be traced back to some underlying environmental factors that can lead to discouragement and eventual consideration of career path in other non-communication related jobs. One of such is economic factor; it involves low remuneration or, in some cases, non-regular payment of staff salaries by media organizations. This results in their financial situation being so bad that it negatively affects the zeal and enthusiasm with which they perform their official duties and eventually make them consider a career switch. Another factor that also leads to career switch is demographic discrimination in assigning workload and benefits allocation; this issue can be noticed in many organizations in Nigeria where some people are given priority consideration for some key positions and assignments over others due to gender or age discrimination, even when it is obvious that those who are sidelined are more capable of delivering effectively. Such discrimination is capable of getting those sidelined frustrated and eventually make them consider a career switch.

Demographic favoritism can also be in terms of preference for people from a particular geographic location, especially when the employer is from the same geographic location. Marital status can sometimes also make journalism professionals consider a career switch; some official duties can be easily and more effectively performed by those who are single than those who are married. For instance, when a single lady who has been working as a journalist becomes married and the spouse forbids her from continuing to do the same job, she would be left with no other choice than to consider a career switch to another profession so as to protect her marriage. Job satisfaction is another factor that makes journalism professionals consider a career switch to other profession. This mostly occurs when the job condition or working environment begins to get unbearable. Journalism professionals tend to consider a career switch in such a situation. Job preference is another factor that leads to career switch intention among journalism professionals i.e. some of them may have preference for certain kinds of job which may not really fall within the purview of journalism.

Ownership influence is also another factor that sparks career switch intention in the journalism professionals; some owners of media organizations are fond of trying to bend their employees to their own will and rules especially when it is obvious that

such rules negate the ethical standard of their profession. Such practice often makes journalism professionals gradually develop less interest in their profession and eventually consider a career switch. Lack of job motivation can also make journalism professionals start considering a career switch and this occurs when all the factors discussed so far are manifesting in the line of their duties. Little by little they start developing less and less motivation in their official duties and eventually they will consider a career switch.

Statement of the Problem

Journalism profession is an attractive one which deals with investigating, processing and disseminating information. Many professionals started their carrier in journalism and lived to the end of their lives practising the profession. On the contrary, the upsurge in career change to non-communication related jobs by journalism professionals in Nigeria today is becoming a phenomenon that should be of great concern to students of Mass Communication, parents, media organizations, and all stakeholders in both academic and media settings. However, a very little attention has been given to this issue and it is expected to be on the rise in the near future if some drastic measures are not put in place to check the reasons behind it and also proffer the best possible solution to it (Ewuola & Awofadeju, 2019).

This study seeks to explore the reasons behind the tendency for journalism professionals to change to non-communication related jobs. Thus, it seeks to ascertain whether their intention to change career is influenced by work conditions or is necessitated by unpleasant factors associated with the mass communication career.

Research Questions

1. How can media ownership influence lead to career switch intention among journalism professionals?
2. In what way can marital status influence career switch intention among journalism professionals?

Review of related literature

Age, Gender, and Marital Status

Findings from Hakim (2000; 2006) on women's careers in the UK and the US suggest that women mostly exhibit adaptive careers while men, according to Huang, El-Khouri, Johansson, Lindroth, and Sverke (2007) and Mainiero and Sullivan (2005), tend to have more linear, traditional career patterns placing more emphasis on monetary rewards and promotion. McGovern and Hart (1992) also found that prestige and salary were more important to men, and flexibility was more important to women. These findings comply with Igbaria and Parasuraman (1991), Kim (2004), and Watts (1993) who reported that most women valued balance between work and personal life higher than men.

Nonetheless, other studies have found no gender differences in intentions to change careers (Carless & Bernath, 2007). For example, Miguel (1993) concludes that there are two competing perspectives about gender differences with respect to career decisions. One is that women and men are different in terms of career orientation, attitudes, and values, while the other holds that they are the same if mediating variables are controlled. The latter perspective is supported by findings from Kim, Mone, and Kim (2008) revealing that males and females did not have substantially different career orientations when potentially mediating variables, such as age, employment level and education level, were held constant. In this regard, numerous previous studies claiming that females place a higher value than males on work-family balance and thus are more likely to switch careers to have this flexibility (e.g. Kim, 2004) may have limitations. Thus, the present study will explore whether females or males are more likely to change careers. Conversely, Valcour and Tolbert (2003) found that career change tended to work well for women, due to a number of factors including time off for child-bearing and raising, and moving due to a spouse's career. The authors also found that these types of career decisions do not serve men well and that men are more likely to stay with one company, seeking promotions within an organization.

To further buttress the notion of the likes of Kim (2004) that females place a higher value than males on work-family balance and thus are more likely to switch careers to have this flexibility, women usually prefer to remain at comfort zones at all times. It is their belief that their husbands have the responsibility to provide for their homes; they are meant only to provide support to their husbands where needed. As a result they most times become satisfied with any income they have

from a job, while they maintain work-family balance attitude. Pursuant to the above, since men are saddled with the responsibility of providing for their homes, men are indeed usually under pressure to make more income so as to be able to fend for their families and most times it leads to changing from one job to another.

Job Security and Job Satisfaction as determinants of Career Switch Intention

Job insecurity has become a "hot topic" in work and organizational psychology during the last 20 years, and has recently been termed "one of the most important stressors in contemporary working life". Due to the upsurge of mergers and acquisitions, restructuring and related methods of adapting to the globalizing market, more and more people are feeling uncertain about the future existence of their jobs. König, Debus, Häusler, Lendenmann, & Kleinmann (2010) conducted a research to examine whether three possible resources (occupational self-efficacy, work locus of control and communication) moderate the negative job insecurity–performance relationship. Survey method was used to gather information from 668 employees at a large Swiss logistics company which was used as the population to be studied. Analyses of the obtained data reveal two significant interaction effects: the higher the job insecurity, the less influence work locus of control and perceived communication exert on the job insecurity –performance relationship.

The data revealed significant interactions only for work locus of control and perceived communication on self-rated task performance. When job insecurity was low, work locus of control and perceived communication were more strongly related to self-rated task performance compared to when job insecurity was high. The research also revealed virtually no relationships between job insecurity and the performance ratings. However, there were strong relationships between self-efficacy, work locus of control and perceived communication on the one side and self-rated performance on the other, and weak relationships between the same variables and supervisor-rated performance. The interactions, although small in size, suggest that the resources locus of control and communication can only act beneficially in a situation of low job insecurity. The higher job insecurity becomes, the smaller the differences in self-rated performance between people with different levels of work locus of control and perceived communication become. This suggests that the role that work locus of control and perceived communication play

in the job insecurity–performance relationship gets smaller as job insecurity increases.

Theory of Planned Behavior

According to Sheppard, Hartwick and Warshaw (1988), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) started as the Theory of Reasoned Action in 1980 to predict an individual's intention to engage in a behavior at a specific time and place. The theory was intended to explain all behaviors over which people have the ability to exert self-control. The key component of this model is behavioral intent; behavioral intentions are influenced by the attitude about the likelihood that the behavior will have the expected outcome and the subjective evaluation of the risks and benefits of that outcome. This theory is related to this work because career change oftentimes occurs as a result of lack of those variables that lead to job motivation; such variables include job satisfaction, job security, absence of demographic discrimination, etc. When these variables are lacking, employees tend to develop negative behavior and less enthusiasm for their jobs, which leads to less productivity. This certainly is at their employer's disadvantage. If the situation remains unchanged over a period of time, they will eventually consider a career or job switch. Theory of Planned Behavior states that behavioral achievement depends on both motivation (intention) and ability (behavioral control). It distinguishes between three types of beliefs: behavioral, normative, and control.

Method

In-depth interview method was adopted as the study is hinged on qualitative data which are more elaborate and interactive. Scholars have viewed in-depth interview as an intensive interview scheduled in advance, which takes place in a private setting conducive to trust and candour, and requires careful preparation (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). In-depth interview uses a small sample to get more information; it provides detailed background about the reasons respondents give specific answers. Elaborate data concerning respondents' opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences, and feelings are obtained (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The population is made up of all conceivable elements, subjects or observation relating to particular phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Asika, 2009). Journalists who have spent five years and above in NTA Ibadan, the *Nigerian Tribune* Newspaper, and FRCN Ibadan formed the population of this study. The

rationale for this population is that these sets of journalists have more experience about the subject matter than others. Purposive sampling which belongs to non–probability sampling was adopted. Six reporters out of 240 reporters from the three media houses chosen were sampled. The researcher reached the saturation point as all the six gave the same response to the questions asked. The standardised open-ended interview format, where the same questions were asked to all the reporters, was adopted. The interview guide schedule was used as the instrument of data collection, while the data were analysed thematically.

Results

Media ownership influence on career switch intention

By and large, participants unanimously maintained that media ownership played a significant impact on career switch intention. Specifically, the participants argued that media ownership influence goes a long way to determine whether a mass communication professional would remain in the job or switch to a better one, especially when a great opportunity comes knocking. Influence of media ownership tends to come to play more in privately owned media houses. One of the respondents stated that: "there is this common saying that he who pays the piper dictates the tune; so for some of us working in the private sector, we are at the mercy of the owners…for example if he wakes up on the right side of the bed, we are rest assured that it is going to be a good day but if otherwise, a little and pardonable mistake can spoil your day". Another participant stated that: "for privately owned media houses, it is a big problem. Based on my previous experience, if the owner is autocratic, your idea does not matter, no matter how relevant it looks. This may make you feel rejected and thus you have that strong desire to look for job where your contribution counts, especially at the administrative level".

Marital status influence on career switch intention

The influence of demographic features and marital status inclusive on career switch intention cannot be overlooked among journalism professionals. Specifically, the influence is more severe among married women. A participant stated that: "it is not a problem in most organizations; but in some organizations, they do not allow a couple to work in the same media house…I know of one of our colleagues that had to resign involuntarily because her partner was also a staff member in the same

media station where she worked". Also, age and years of previous experience in related job are very key factors that come to play when seeking a career in the mass communication industry – hence, there is discrepancy on how much you earn". Another participant stated that: "marriage can change a lot…I am on air from 6am to 11pm every day; imagine if I'm married, it can lead to divorce, especially if my husband was such an inconsiderate person. The only option that might save my marriage was if I was allowed to shift my time."

She further said that: "if my husband fails to reason along with my job demands, I may have no option than to switch to a more flexible job, especially since the job pays less than anticipated". Another participant stated that: "in some areas (rural or local), the nature of the inhabitants may influence my stay on the job for the time being or not….Take for instance, if my job demands that I reach out to Islamic dominated illiterates or religious bigots on the need to embrace family planning and I could not make a head move after a while, I may be forced to switch my career to such that will make me more relevant…. Sincerely, I met a colleague during my last coverage in Qatar, who was encountering a similar challenge."

Discussion of Findings

There are some factors that have been linked to career switch intention among journalism professionals that are working across private and public media outlets in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The identified influences include media ownership and marital influence.

Media ownership also plays a significant role in the career switch intention among journalism professionals. A situation where media organization owners dictate to journalism professionals almost on every action or function and force them to work against the stipulated rules and ethics of their profession could create career switch intention in them. In addition, any action or decision of the media organization owners that intimidates them, in terms of gagging and insulting the journalism professionals, could lead to career switch intention in them.

The findings of this study are in consonance with Hartwick and Warshaw's (1998) theory of planned behaviour that pivots this study which argues that behavioral achievement depends on both motivation and ability. The theory is comprised of six constructs that collectively represent a person's actual control over the behavior but the two of them that are most applicable in this context are the behavioral

intention and the perceived power. Perceived power refers to the perceived presence of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of a behavior. Perceived power contributes to a person's perceived behavioral control over each of those factors. In the case of media owners' influence on the journalism professionals, trying to force them to engage in unethical activities may be seen as an abuse of powers and therefore leading to the decision to quit their jobs. Behavioral intention, on the other hand, refers to the motivational factors that influence a given behavior where the stronger the intention to perform the behavior, the more likely the behavior will be performed. Journalism professionals would want to remain in their jobs as long as their job security is not threatened and they are not subjected to any form of intimidation which may lead to frustration and eventual career switch. Once they begin to sense any form of gagging, undue insults on their personalities, and oppression from their employers, it would be natural for them to begin to consider seeking alternative employments. In Nigeria today, many of the media organization owners are either politicians or are having very good relationship with politicians. As a result, they are always partisan in political and governance matters. Conventionally, mass media professionals should have the freedom to follow news leads, investigate every news lead, and also report unbiased news to the general public but when the owners of media organizations begin to try to influence news reported to the public by trying to bend media professionals to their obviously unethical rules, such negative influence of media owners seems like trying to gag journalism professionals from reporting balanced and unbiased news to the public. This lack of freedom makes them begin to have less enthusiasm in the job they do and, as a result, they begin to consider moving to another organization where they will have the needed freedom to work without any form of unethical influence from their employers.

The responses of the participants interviewed also corroborate these findings as they unanimously maintained that media ownership played a significant impact on career switch intention. The truth is that when a leader or management of an organization carries employees along with the plans and projections of the organization, such employees would develop a sense of belonging because of the feeling that they are valued and this would make them to also key into the organization's plans and projections towards ensuring that those projections are achieved. When this happens, such employees tend to have little or no intention to

switch job on the ground of management style; no employee feels comfortable in an organization where they feel they are not valued, neither will they contribute to the progress of such organization because they know that their efforts will not be appreciated and their opinions will not matter to the owner of the firm or those in management positions. Consequently, if the opportunity presents itself, such employees will not think twice before they take employment in another place where their contributions will matter, at least to a reasonable extent. These findings are also supported by O'Donell and Boyle (2008) who maintained that career switch intention would probably be high in an organization where the employer's attitude towards a majority of the employees is trying to bend the employees to their own will and rules, especially when it obvious that such rules negate the ethical standard of their profession. It is therefore evident that mass media ownerships' attitude to journalism professionals, whether positive or negative, could influence their career switch intention.

Another key area that has been looked into in this research is the marital status of journalism professionals and how it affects their job performances. It is a general societal perception that journalism is not meant for married women and that some official assignments cannot be carried out by married women journalists.

Indeed, journalism is a very demanding profession and only a few married women can cope with the stress attached to it. Journalists sometimes have to go extra mile to unravel mysteries surrounding news leads; this sometimes requires that they work late every day and even put their lives at risk when situation demands for it. For instance, the journalists that cover war situations, insurgencies and robbery attack scenarios are most times exposed to very high risks to their lives. Some who are not covering war situations but still have key information that may expose very dangerous people in the society often receive threat messages to their lives and loved ones. It is therefore generally believed that married women cannot endure the tight conditions of journalism practice because their husbands would not be supportive of their journalism profession. Even single ladies in journalism profession mostly do not opt for the assignments that may expose them to high risks and threat to their lives. This is why men are more often given such assignments knowing that they are more courageous and stronger than women. Besides that, they are not as limited by marriage factor as women in their journalism profession. These assertions are also supported by Hakim (2006) and Huang et al. (2007) who maintained that women's career decision remains more complex than men's as a

result of their multiple family and work related roles. Ignaria and Parasuraman (1991) and Kim (2004) also buttress the influence of marital status on career switch intention by maintaining that females placed a higher value than males on work-family balance and therefore were more likely to switch careers than their male colleagues.The participants of the interviews conducted in this research did not have any different view from these findings either; in fact, they all agreed that the influence is more severe among married women.

These findings therefore suggest that the married women among the journalism professionals in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria, due to marital status, may have higher career switch intention compared to their counterparts that are not yet married.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The ideas of many journalism professionals, in most cases, do not matter to some media house owners – they are sometimes discarded without being given a second thought. Consequently, career switch intention was relatively higher among journalism professionals working in private media houses as a result of the aforementioned environmental factor. For instance, participants in this qualitative study identified demographic features, among which were marital status, years of experience on the job, as well as age, as key factors that influenced career switch intention among employees of mass communication houses operating in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria.This study therefore recommends that media organization owners should desist from forcing journalism professionals to work against the stipulated rules and ethics of their profession; rather, they should be availed the needed freedom to do their jobs without any form of unethical influence from their employers. The media owners should also be acquainted with the ethics of the media practice.

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