

# Gender in journalism education: addressing shortfalls in male students' enrolment at a media department in Uganda

Aisha Sembatya Nakiwala, Makerere University and Florence Namasinga Selnes, independent researcher

## Abstract

'To transform gender relations in the media, we need to start with the journalists of tomorrow' (Made, 2010, p.5). Brown Made's observation underscores the importance of incorporating gender in training prospective journalists because media play an important role of giving a voice to the voiceless and transforming society. It also highlights the need to examine gender dimensions in academic journalism programs because gender training can lead to gendered newsroom culture and practices in the professional media world. This paper contributes to research on gender in journalism education by focusing on gaps in inclusion of male students in media training, which can play an important role in gender mainstreaming in journalism curricula in higher institutions of learning. The paper explores the issue of a gender gap in an undergraduate program based on the 'participant observation' that male students do not opt for the gender in

media and communication course offered at Makerere University. Drawing on interviews with students and lecturers and content analysis of official documents, this article explores the underlying factors for a gender gap in uptake of the gender course in journalism programmes and proposes strategies to address it. Based on the findings, the paper argues that the factors that inhibit male students from enrolling into gender courses pertain not to individual students alone but also to institutional and structural barriers that require long-term efforts to change.

**Key words:** Gender, gender training, gender in media, Uganda, journalism education

## Introduction

**Uganda has strong legal and policy frameworks that encourage women emancipation, but women remain under-represented and removed from important societal processes. Studies about gender and the media show that men dominate Uganda's public sphere and that women remain at the margins of media reportage as news subjects and news sources (Namasinga, 2018; UMWA, 2016; ACME, 2016; GMMP, 2015; Garberg and Ruud, 2011).**

Furthermore, Ugandan media continue to propagate stereotypes about women, portraying them in traditional gender roles (GMMP, 2015; UMWA, 2014; Kaija, 2013). In terms of education, gender parity advocates suggest training as an important factor in addressing gender imbalance in the media (UMWA, 2014), underscoring the need to integrate gender in training of prospective journalists (Made, 2010). Anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that gender is incorporated in curricula of journalism training programs in Uganda (Dralega et al, 2016). Moreover, our analysis shows a trend towards feminization of journalism programs evidenced in the growing number of female students and faculty in journalism training institutions. Yet, most of the students do not end up in newsrooms and some of those who do so leave the profession (Kaija, 2013), for occupations in public relations and communication.

This paper's point of departure lies in its focus on the gender in media and communication course offered in the Bachelor of Journalism and Communication at Makerere University, Uganda's oldest and largest journalism training institution. It was observed that male students in the journalism and communication undergraduate program do not study a course titled gender in media and communication, one of the elective courses offered in final year. The course has, since its introduction in 2010, mostly attracted female students, which from this paper's point of view, creates a numeric gender gap. Thus, the paper examines: a) how male students perceive the subject of gender, b) male students' experiences of learning gender and c) factors that hinder their selection of the course. The paper also reflects on the history of teaching gender at the journalism department; how gender issues are taught and how these contribute to the gender gap in student enrolment; the underlying factors for this gender gap and proposes strategies to address the gap(s). The purpose is not just to examine the said gender deficit but also to draw a few, but decisive conclusions on change actions that journalism and media departments ought to take in order to motivate more male students to study gender. Data that informed this paper was collected through qualitative interviewing of male students and selected lecturers as well as content analysis of curriculum and students' evaluation reports.

The focus on male students offers valuable insights into a broader understanding of how journalism edu-

cation programs can bolster enrolment of students into gender courses and possibly contribute to reducing gender inequity in media. This study echoes researchers such as Brown Made (2010) and emphasizes the role of training prospective journalists in improving the status of women in media and society. Also, exploring various dimensions of gender in journalism education not only has implications for journalism professional standards but also contributes to raising the status of women.

## Gender and journalism education in context

Journalism training expanded rapidly in Uganda partly due to the liberalization of the media industry in the early 1990s, the liberalization of the political landscape and the expansion of higher education (Namasinga, 2011). Currently, there are several universities and tertiary institutions that teach journalism at undergraduate and graduate levels. Formal journalism training in Uganda can be traced to 1988 when a degree program in mass communication under the Department of Literature was established at Makerere University. The Journalism and Communication department - formally called Department of Mass Communication - was founded in 1998. It is Uganda's largest and most influential journalism training institution with a population of about 550 students in the various programs. In 2010, UNESCO gazetted the department as a potential centre of excellence.

Scholars like Rosen (2002) recommend that journalism education should be dynamic, introspective, and continuously redefine its mission and its methods in response to evolving technologies, global culture, and the needs of the media industries. The leadership and journalism educators at Makerere University have in the past two decades been cognizant of such advice by revising curricula to match the demands of the media industry and to reflect the evolving nature of journalism and communication training. In 2009, the university enacted the Makerere University Gender Equity Policy (MUGEP, 2009) in which plans were made to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue in all institutional functions, teaching inclusive. More specifically, through the MUGEP, the university undertook to support programs that emphasize gender balance in the enrollment and performance of students in all disciplines. MUGEP, in aiming to engender curricula of all academic programs, also proposed for a university-wide core course on gender and development to be undertaken by all students during their first year of study. Such a move was rooted in the logic of ensuring gender-responsive academic programs. Around the same time, the university instituted an academic program restructuring committee, which recommended a distinct course unit on gender and the media to be taught as part of the journalism degree program.

In 2010, the department revised and adopted its undergraduate curriculum and changed the program's name from Mass Communication to Journalism and Communication. As Namasinga (2011) argued, the old mass communication curriculum was out of touch with the needs of the real world. For instance, in the specific context of this paper, media and gender was previously only taught as a topic under the development communication module (Nassanga, personal communication, July 2020). Thus, the new curriculum expanded the training to include the gender in media and communication, as a stand-alone course, which has also been retained in the revised curriculum that is still awaiting approval. The gender in media and communication course is designed to facilitate students' appreciation of various gender issues as they affect media and communication. Students are introduced to basic gender concepts, explore how gender interventions influence media operations, and learn how to integrate gender in media and communication programmes. Indicative course content in this unit comprise gender access to information and communication channels, coverage, and portrayal of women in the media, gender-responsive advertising and gender mainstreaming in the media. The course is taught over a period of 17 weeks, including conducting all course assessments. The assessment comprises course assignments that contribute 40% and a final written examination that contributes 60% to students' final grade.

An analysis of students' registration documents revealed that the number of male students opting for the gender in media and communication course remains low compared to that of their female counterparts. For instance, the percentage of male students opting for this course unit has ranged between 25.9% in 2014 and 23% in 2020. In the last five years, of the 135 students who opted for this course unit, only 23 were male. This number is below the desired level of gender equity of 50% that is recommended in the university policy (MUGEP, 2009). The gender in media and communication course unit has been offered at the Department of Journalism and Communication since the 2010/2011 academic year. However, the stumpy male students' enrollment in the gender course should also be considered in the context of the actual proportion of enrollment of female and male students in the journalism program. In general, male student population has in the

past 10 years been much lower compared to that of women, as illustrated in table 1. We return to the discussion on male journalism students' enrollment in media and gender training later in the article.

<b>Final Year</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
2014	28	48	<b>76</b>
2015	20	50	<b>70</b>
2016	57	82	<b>139</b>
2017	36	71	<b>107</b>
2018	34	84	<b>118</b>
2019	19	59	<b>78</b>
2020	33	62	<b>95</b>

Source: Official university documents

**Table 1: Final year students on the Bachelor of Journalism and Communication**

## Gender in journalism education: a literature review

Education has been regarded as a form of social capital which empowers and enhances women's competitiveness in predominantly patriarchal societies (Djerf-Pierre, 2007). Thus, gender has become an integral part in journalism and media education due to the appreciation that training and media play a significant role in achieving gender parity and fighting inequality. As such, journalism educators across the globe face pressure to integrate gender issues to realize diversity in media content (Baldasty et al, 2003). Scholarly research on journalism, media and gender tend to focus on mainstreaming gender in journalism and integrating gender in journalism education (for example Dralega et al, 2016; Geertsema-Sligh, 2014; Made, 2010), while others assess the number of female students vis-a-vis their male counterparts in journalism training programs (for example Boateng, 2017; Made, 2009). Kodwo Boateng, for instance, examined the 'growing feminization of journalism in Ghana'. Basing on UNESCO's gender parity index model, Boateng found 'a significant shift in the gender parity ratio in favor of women in journalism education' at the Ghana Institute of Journalism. Indeed, the number of women studying journalism, media and communication has significantly increased with some reports showing that women dominate journalism schools (York, 2017; Reid, 2015).

Gender mainstreaming in journalism education according to Margaretha Geertsema-Sligh (2014), is one of 'the cutting-edge' ways to include gender into journalism. Geertsema-Sligh's point of view emphasizes the importance of educating future journalists about gender issues so that media fulfill their democratic role of giving a voice to the voiceless. Geertsema-Sligh's view essentially echoes assertions that to change gender relations in the media, 'we need to start with the journalists of tomorrow' (Made, 2010, p.5). In the same vein, other gender scholars regard training as essential to removing gender biases (Morna and Shilongo, 2004). All taken together, these sentiments highlight the importance of including and emphasizing gender issues in the training of prospective journalists.

Despite the conviction of the significance of integrating gender in journalism curricula, many studies that evaluate the inclusion of gender have found shortfalls. A study commissioned by the Gender in Media Education (GIME) found that: a) only a few media and journalism institutions have policies to achieve gender equality, b) males make up the majority of academic staff while females make up the majority of students, c) gender remains largely absent from curricula, d) attention to gender topics depends on the knowledge of individual instructors, e) gender was missing from course materials and gender was also missing from assessments of students and faculty work (Made, 2010 cited in Geertesema-Sligh, 2014, p.71). An audit of gender mainstreaming in three media and journalism education departments in Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia confirmed the findings in GIME's report (Dralega et al, 2016). Dralega and colleagues found "minimal, unclear and uncoordinated gender mainstreaming activities in policies, curricula and research." They further established that the departments not only lacked teaching resources and commitment to implement existing gender-related policies, but also lacked awareness and knowledge about gender.

While research shows that journalism and media training departments have no gender specific courses or modules (Made, 2010), it should be noted that the trend has since changed as several institutions have in-

tegrated gender in their training programs. For example, Dralega and colleagues (2016) found that Uganda Christian University – a private journalism training institution - offers gender as a compulsory course in its MA program while universities in Rwanda and Ethiopia included gender topics within other courses. This current study examines what we call a “gender deficit” in the gender [and media] course offered in the Bachelor of Journalism and Communication program at Makerere University. Unlike previous studies that audit gender mainstreaming approaches and processes in journalism and media institutes and departments, we focus on a single course as articulated in the introduction. This paper examines why the gender course is less popular among male students and explores the underlying factors that influence students’ choice of courses.

## Method

A qualitative research approach was chosen based on qualitative interviewing of students and teachers. Key Informant Interviews were conducted with lecturers and students who were involved in teaching and learning process on male students’ lack of interest in gender studies. The study involved 15 participants comprising 10 final-year male students (out of 33) and five selected lecturers working at the Department of Journalism and Communication. The selection of participants was based on the purposive sampling method (Onwuegbuazie and Leech, 2007). The sample of 10 male students was drawn from final year students who were not enrolled in the Gender in media and communication course because they were directly concerned with the subject of this paper. Inclusion of students was based on their willingness and availability to participate in online interviews. Although the aim was to interview as many students on the onset of the research, the lockdown of the country due to the Coronavirus pandemic made it difficult to access them all, yet some of them were unable to participate in online interviews. The lecturers comprising of three males and two females, were included in the study mainly for their expertise on the subject. One of the three male lecturers was also the head of department at the time of the research and the other two were interested in the subject of gender in the media. Conversely, one of the female lecturers was the department’s coordinator for curriculum development and the other taught the gender course unit.

## Data collection and analysis

This study relied on interviews with the 15 participants and qualitative content analysis (QCA), which as Hsieh and Shannon (2005) note is suitable for studying documents and text analysis. Owing to Covid-19 restrictions, all interviews with the 10 students were conducted online through email or WhatsApp. The interview data from all students was collected using a standard open-ended interview protocol. The protocol comprised questions that focused on students’ understanding of gender, its relevance in their education, their reasons for not selecting gender as part of their course and what in their view ought to be done to make gender and the media attractive to male students. The interviews were conducted over a period of one month, between July and August 2020 depending on the availability of students as per their convenience.

Interviews with lecturers were conducted in person and online for those who were unable to be physically present. Interviewing of lecturers followed a conversational style and was important for eliciting responses relating to: a) the incorporation of gender in the journalism and communication curriculum; b) methods of teaching gender in the department; c) the importance of gender in media training; d) the history of the teaching of gender in the department, e) why male students were not as interested in the gender course and f) views on what can be done to improve male students’ interest in gender and the media. It is important to note here that because the conclusions drawn in this paper are based on a small sample of 15 participants, the findings of this paper are not generalizable. However, they provide useful insights into understanding the shortfalls in teaching gender in journalism programs and suggest ways of addressing them to attract male students to gender studies.

In addition to the 15 interviews, a qualitative content analysis of relevant documents was conducted to increase the trustworthiness and dependability of the findings. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) argue that QCA aims to describe and interpret textual data through systematic identification of categories, themes and patterns. They add that QCA involves the application of language and contextual clues to make sense of data. It is these contextual clues that the paper sought to unravel through a close examination of content that was gleaned from relevant documents in the department under study. Reviewed documents included the undergraduate curriculum, students’ registration lists and students’ evaluation reports of the gender course

unit for the years 2016-2019. The reports were generated by the course lecturers at the end of each semester, based on students' evaluation of the gender and media course. Content analysis contributed to understanding of the course content as described in the curriculum documents. From the evaluation reports, it was possible to discern how past students rated the gender in media and communication course in terms of relevance, usefulness, course content, as well as teaching and assessment methods.

In terms of analysis, all audio interviews with both students and lecturers were recorded and transcribed. Those that came through email were downloaded and responses re-arranged to allow for logical flow corresponding to each interviewee. The interview material was saved and organized on a computer in 15 MSword files, each corresponding to an interviewee. Following several times of re-reading, thematic analysis of material was conducted. This involved manual coding, where all interview responses were arranged in clear categories that communicated insights relevant to the aim of this paper. The categories were repeatedly compared with and between each other to remove overlaps and mis-categorization. Following this process, themes emerged and labelling of such themes was done as indicated in the findings below.

## Findings and analysis

This paper interrogates why male students do not pursue the gender course. Three categories of factors including individual students' perceptions of the subject of gender; institutional factors as well as social and cultural predispositions were discernible based on the analysis. All these were directly or otherwise related to the gendered constructions, thus requiring concrete change actions so that gender studies can appeal to male students in Uganda's oldest journalism degree programme. The analysis found gender shortfalls at two levels a) a deficit in the course content and b) a deficit related to the inclination of male students and faculty towards gender studies and the course in question. The findings are interpreted below in line with these two 'deficits' as 'male students' conception of the course' and content of gender course.

### Male students' rejection of the subject of gender and journalism.

From individual students' perceptions of the subject of gender, it was found that male students understood the importance of gender. However, many did not fully appreciate the benefit of choosing it as part of their study subjects. Gender education was regarded to be less useful in the world of employment and for their career ambitions compared to several other subjects such as communication planning, design, news production and editing that the students reported to be more hands-on and therefore important for preparing them for actual employment on completion of their degree program. None of the students agreed that the gender in media and communication course prepared them for the job market. They regarded it as a course geared towards acquiring general knowledge, other than employability skills, which they noted should be the focus in their final year of journalism training. However, in an analysis of students' feedback collected at the end of the semester during the evaluation of the course unit, both female and male students who attended the gender unit highly rated the course. Some suggested that it should, in fact, be compulsory, which is not currently the case. They appreciated how it would be useful not only in their professional work as journalists and communication experts, but also in their personal life at home with family, amongst friends, and in their communities.

Further, gender as a subject of study was perceived by male students not just as less essential, but also one that is fit and designed for their female colleagues. Male student enrollment in this unit is hindered by a general misconception about the concept of gender. Statements of perceptions that gender is meant for women, were emphasized by all the interviewed male students, all of which were based on personal beliefs, values, knowledge, and experiences. Take the example of one of the students in the excerpt below:

*First, there is a perception among the people when it comes to the term gender, me included. If that word is put or used anywhere, in most cases, it means fighting for women's dominance in the disguise of fighting for equity and equality between the sexes. In this very [Covid-19] lockdown, if a man beats wife, they refer to it as gender-based violence. But when a woman beats a man, they call it normal fight (not gender-based) and praise the energy of the lady. At Makerere University, there is a school called school of women and gender, why not school of men and gender? Anything which includes the word or term gender in my own experience aims at elevating women from one level to another or even beyond that of men. Even the minister of gender in most cases comes out to fight and defend the rights of women, why not fight for men? - (R5, July 15, 2020)*

The lecturers who participated in this study echoed similar sentiments regarding students' misconception that gender is about women. Students associate gender with women. Thus, male students often think it is only female students who need knowledge of gender issues. So, they reject the course unit as implied in the excerpt below:

*In Uganda, whenever you mention the word gender, people get the impression that you are talking about women without necessarily appreciating the broader meaning of the term. When you tell students that the course is about gender, they have an impression that it is a course for women. - (R3, July 9, 2020)*

Similarity was found between students' predispositions of gender and their lecturers' observations. Lecturers disclosed that teaching and learning gender at Makerere University in general was predisposed to suffer from negative perceptions that equate gender to women. They were concerned that the university had overly associated the term gender with femininity at the expense of masculinity. Like one of the students, the lecturers contended that this was further reflected in the name of the mother academic unit for the gender discipline: School of Gender and Women Studies, something they said contributed to the bias that male students have. One of the lecturers explained thus:

*We have not done a good job of talking about masculinity. Students understand a lot about femininity and the relationship between the femininity aspect of gender is studied, but the masculinity aspect of gender studies is rarely talked about [...]. Yet this course is very important to male students. Male students as husbands, male students as fathers, I think they would appreciate that concept [...], from the conceptual part of it. - (R13, August 6, 2020)*

## Shortfalls in course content and administration

Although all interviewed students viewed the gender in media and communication course as a female-oriented subject, it was perhaps the course content that appeared to cement their disengagement with this unit. For example, some perceived the content to be outrightly designed for female students since, as one noted, 'women and feminine issues dominate the course content.' Students talked a great deal about the course content having little benefit for male students, some going to the extent of describing topics they viewed as gender-biased content. One student, for instance, questioned why the content addressed female representation and portrayal in the media but not male. An analysis of the curriculum documents aligned with this students' concern. For example, the course outline had women's media, feminist theories and why focus on women as some of the topics. But none specifically addressed men's issues. One student argued that he did not opt for the gender course because he did not want to study something that could turn him into 'a male feminist' and later on make him disrespect his religious beliefs:

*I am a Muslim by religion and a Muganda by tribe. Religiously, women must be submissive to men and the same when it comes to culture but not to be above them. Having heard the name of that course unit gender, what came to my mind was, this course unit will teach things which are contrary to my culture as well as religion. I thought it would teach girls that they can be like us in the field and they can serve like the way we do, which I disagree with. - (R1, July 9, 2020).*

The view that the course on gender and media is female-oriented has been expressed in other contexts. For instance, North (2015) noted worry among female students who feared that the gender unit offered in a journalism department at Monash University would not appeal to male students because its content was biased towards women. Aside from the need to restructure the course content, the respondents' views above are evidence that students have little understanding and/or a lack of appreciation of debates about gender in relation to journalism and the media in general. The focus of most of the research about gender and the media focuses on women. Some of the scholarship focuses on lack of women in key editorial positions, payment inequality between male and female journalists and sexual harassment of female journalists (Hanusch, 2013; North, 2012; Byerly, 2011; Ross, 2010).

From an institutional perspective, the analysis showed that students did not like it that the course was (only) taught by female lecturers. From their general experience with one of the lecturers from other courses, students indicated preference for other courses taught by less strict teachers, other than gender studies. Clearly students' aversion for gender studies was influenced by both lecturers being female, but what was not clear in the interviews was whether the lecturer issue relates to inadequate male staff to teach the gender course. The lack of teachers of gender issues has been identified in other studies as a problem facing journalism institutions (Dralega, et al, 2016; North, 2015).

In addition, the analysis revealed bottlenecks resulting from course categorization, timetabling, and sched-

uling, which also speak to the devaluation that the department subjects the gender course units to. It was specifically mentioned by both lecturers and students that the course unit was an elective unit in the final year. Further, it is timetabled to coincide with various courses that were regarded as (more) interesting and attractive by students. As such many students opt for the other courses, but not gender issues:

*Right now, it is an elective, yet it is a very important course. Every job you are going to do in every sector in the country, in every international organization, insists on the issue of gender. - (R2, July 8, 2020)*

*The university has a gender policy. This policy led to the creation of a university-wide course on gender. I do not think that course has taken off as it should have. But if it had, then it would make timetabling of the course on media and gender compulsory and not elective. It is an elective course that is put along other courses that, from the perspective of students, are better marketed. - (R13, August 6, 2020)*

From these excerpts, the choice of gender studies is tied to their market value. The respondent in the first excerpt specially regards the gender course in relation to possible employment opportunities in non-governmental organizations. It is, thus, arguable that students' career aspirations partly determine their choice of studying gender.

The two excerpts also show that students and lecturers alike believe that being an elective unit is evidence that the department does not attach much importance to the gender course. Making it an elective is one of the reasons why male students do not take it. While it is commendable that the journalism department offers the course at all, making it optional downplays the significance of gender issues. Scheduling and timetabling of courses mentioned above is a challenge at the university due to the large number of students and the cross-cutting courses they take. The high number of students at Makerere University resulted from the private sponsorship scheme, which opened the university to self-financing students (Mamdani, 2007 cited in Namasinga, 2011, p.59). Conversely, the resources at the university do not match the student numbers, hence making it difficult for students to prioritize optional courses such as the one on gender.

Further, the study found a connection between broader socio-cultural practices and norms and students' attitude towards the gender course. The analysis showed that male students' rejection of the gender in media and communication course is instigated by barriers that primarily concern cultural and religious shortcomings that Uganda still grapples with. It was manifest that one of the reasons male students did not join the gender course comes down to the cultures and families in which they are groomed, where it is still work in progress to ensure that there is equality and equity between boys and girls in society in general. This view cuts across lecturers and students alike as illustrated in this response:

*The negative connotation connected to demands for gender equality or feminism. Gender activists, who are often females, are still taken to be kind of rebels in society, who want to take over the males' world, yet what they are demanding is gender equality. So, there is still low levels of awareness of why gender has become a big development issue, which contributes to low interest among male students for the course. - (R11, August 3, 2020).*

That male students' attitudes towards studying gender is shaped by religious and cultural predispositions related to conservatism and the challenges supporters of women emancipation must surmount especially in predominantly patriarchal societies.

## Discussion: redressing the gender gap

University journalism education has been largely seen as an important tool for redressing systemic gender inequalities in the media industry through designing and implementing appropriate content on gender issues, but also encouraging inclusion of not just female but also male students (North, 2015). This article addresses a gap in gender and media research, helping us to understand why male students at Uganda's leading journalism trainer do not study gender, which is vital for identifying corrective actions media departments can undertake to increase male students' enrollment in courses on media and gender.

Students' responses suggest that there exist personal, institutional, and structural factors that hinder them from taking gender studies. At an individual level, male students viewed gender studies as a female students' business based on their (mis)perception of the concept of gender as something to do with women, but also on what they saw as biased course content. The view that "gender" studies is for females is also reflected in studies conducted in the West (North, 2015), hence highlighting the need to address attitudes of different

stakeholders including students and employers in addition to creating awareness about the subject of gender.

From the analysis, male students appeared to have been unoriented in what the course entailed well before they make their subject selection. To increase male students' enrollment into the gender in media and communication course, there is need to acknowledge students' misperceptions about the subject of gender. Male students had a basic understanding of gender and seemed unfamiliar with its importance in journalism education. This means that the journalism department at Makerere University must find ways to address negative attitudes towards this subject well before students make their course choices. There is need for the department to enlighten students about the critical position of gender and gender mainstreaming from the point of view of transforming both journalism education and practice, as well as enabling their appreciation of the social issues, such as systematic gender inequality, that impact journalism practice. Whereas it is possible that including masculinity studies in gender courses can exacerbate gender inequality, including modern masculinity studies in the curriculum would make the course more gender-balanced and perhaps appealing to more male students.

Besides viewing the course as being intended for female students, male students also had a bias about gender being taught by only female lecturers, which further strengthened their belief that the course was designed for female students. This is not surprising, as researchers have previously shown that within educational institutions, the term gender is more associated with women than men (Dralega et al, 2016; Kagoda, 2019). However, it means that, institutionally, male lecturers should be encouraged to embrace the gender unit as one of their teaching subjects to further show male students that gender also matters for men. Bringing male lecturers on board may force course tutors to rethink what and how to teach issues of media and gender from a men's point of view. Also, male lecturers would teach gender in ways that make male students understand that women's issues are mainstream and important as opposed to marginal. This is in addition to including gender sensitive masculinity studies in journalism curricula.

Further, evidence from the findings suggests male students' conviction that studying gender does nothing to their employability. However, this contradicts with the view highlighted in the findings of the market value of gender studies in terms of employment in international and non-governmental organizations, which emphasize gender. It is thus important that such a career path is possible for students who thought gender studies affect their employability.

Lastly, there is cultural and religious opposition to the idea of gender equality among some students, owing to religious and cultural inclinations. However, this is not only a Ugandan problem, but one that is prevalent in many countries with a strong religious and cultural background, and therefore requires long-term efforts to address if it is to change. To address the cultural and religious impediments, corrective actions ought to be taken beyond just journalism and media training. The authors of this paper are aware, as North (2015) has previously argued, that redressing such cultural impediments cannot be just a function of education. We, however, agree with her proposal that a cultural shift can be initiated at a pedagogical level, especially if journalism students are enlightened early enough during their four-year degree program about the challenges and the problem of gender discrimination and inequality and how it impacts social well-being. With this knowledge, it is possible for male students to appreciate that gender issues are not meant for female students alone. Moreover, they will further understand the need to address the structural causes of gender inequality and how to address them.

## Conclusion

This paper aimed at: a) exploring the gender gap in journalism training at Makerere University; b) students' experiences of learning gender and c) identifying the underlying factors for the gender gap and proposing strategies for addressing the gap. We interviewed final-year male students of the journalism and communication undergraduate degree program in which the Gender in media and communication course is taught. Male students' views were sought to bring to the fore their perceptions of gender studies and to explore their experience with the gender training. Through qualitative content analysis, the study found that the course is mostly pursued by female students in comparison to their male counterparts. Whereas this phenomenon can be explained by the relatively higher number of female<sup>1</sup> students in the final year compared to males, the analysis showed that the course does not appeal to male students. This creates a gap in the gender training of prospective journalists and has implications for realizing gender equity in both the media and society.

1 There were 95 final year journalism students comprising 62 females and 33 males. Female students dominate university journalism departments all over the world (North, 2015).

The study highlights the role of contextual factors such as religion and culture in shaping male students' perceptions and attitude towards gender. In Uganda, religion and culture play an important role in many people's lives and therefore determine how many regard issues that seem foreign to them. This paper, therefore, argues for the need to consider these factors while designing gender courses. The problem of cultural and religious opposition to gender equality as noted above is not peculiar to Uganda alone. Dislodging it will require sustained change efforts that might take more than just religious or cultural tools and strategies. However, initiating a cultural shift at a pedagogical level can be a starting point in the right direction. The study also demonstrated that male students' choice to ignore gender studies might be influenced by the fact that both lecturers were female. The authors note that encouraging male lecturers to teach the gender in media and communication course would attract male students to the course.

The teaching of the gender in media and communication as a standalone course at Makerere University can contribute to efforts that seek to improve gender parity. The university and the journalism department ought to pay attention to providing training that problematizes and articulates gender issues in a way that attracts both female and male students alike into the course. The authors of this paper believe that any efforts to eliminate gender inequality should include men and address impediments that prevent them from being part of the efforts. The absence of male students in gender training is likely to further propagate gender inequality in journalism practice and in the media generally. In summary, we suggest that: a) students are introduced to gender studies and theories on gender to understand why feminist-leaning media studies dominate scholarship on the subject; b) the course integrates curriculum aspects of modern masculinity to make gender studies appealing to males; c) Students are sensitized about employment opportunities for gender specialists in international and non-governmental agencies ; d) diversifying of lecturers in order to allay students' fears and attract them to the course.

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