The Influence of Instagram Stories on Career Paths of Female Journalism Graduates of Multimedia University of Kenya

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Abstract— This research analyzed the influence of Instagram stories on the career path of female journalism graduates of the Multimedia University of Kenya. The study objective was to determine the influence of Instagram stories on the career path of female graduates of Multimedia University of Kenya. The research was guided by the Cultivation Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, and a thorough review of relevant literature provided a solid foundation for the study. Data collection tools included content analysis and interviews. The study comprised of 15 participants. The thematic analysis approach identified the patterns, themes and meanings in the data collected from the Instagram stories using the content analysis process. The study revealed the intricate relationship between the Instagram platform and female journalism graduates from the Multimedia University of Kenya and Instagram. The platform, through its diverse features, emerges as a powerful influencer in shaping career paths. Respondents indicated that Instagram stories have helped them like their careers more because they interact daily with people who are already pursuing their careers. This has made them work even harder to get to where their mentors are. This research recommends recognizing the significance of Instagram influencers in shaping career perceptions and establishing mentorship programs that connect female journalism graduates with successful influencers. The mentorship programs emphasize transparency and realism in portraying career paths. Through these connections, graduates will gain a more accurate understanding of diverse career journeys within journalism and receive support in navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by the field.

Index Terms— Career path, Female journalism graduates, Influencer, Instagram.

1. Introduction

A. Background Information

Instagram is a communication tool currently being used widely across the globe and has massive influence. The platform was launched in 2010 and has since become the most famous social platform globally (Hootsuite, 2022). Moreover, it has gained over 1 billion active users in 2021 and 2022 (CodeCondo, 2022). Instagram is a social media domain allowing users to share stories, videos and photos. It is used by individuals, organizations and businesses to connect with their audiences and share information. Its emergence as a social media platform has made it a powerful communication tool compared to traditional communication channels such as Television.

Females are considered to be the majority gender in the workforce globally. However, it is essential to note that females choose jobs based on various influential factors they draw from social relations (McKinsey & Company, 2022). According to Shahid Kami et al. (2018) several factors usually affect a person's career path, including family, teachers and public figures. In addition, individual interests in career decision-making have become an essential factor when selecting a career path. The opportunity for social networking on Instagram has also broadened connections and intensified how people make life-changing decisions. Instagram has become a famous stage for female graduates to exhibit their lifestyle, creativity and personal brand, connect with their role models, and shape their career aspirations or development.

B. Statement of the Problem

Social media has become a prevalent part of modern society with Instagram serving as a common platform for people to showcase their professional and personal lives (Burke, 2019). The opportunity for social networking on Instagram has also broadened connections and intensified how people make life-changing decisions. Instagram has become a famous stage for female graduates to exhibit their lifestyle, creativity and personal brand, connect with their role models, and shape their career aspirations or development. As the influence of social media intensifies in contemporary society, concerns have risen concerning its effect on individuals' career path especially those of female graduates in the field of journalism (Ouma, 2013).

Further, many females struggle to select careers that make them look or sound cool to their peers. Additionally, most females graduate and tarmac looking for jobs after completing their studies making them prone and open to new job opportunities different from what they studied in university (Masinde & Kibwage, 2021) based on what they see every day and based on what kind of lifestyle attracts them during their screen time (Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017).

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Several studies (Ahadi & Amoath, 2019; Cesaroni et al., 2017; Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017; Nairaland Forum, 2021; Njogu et al., n.d.) have been conducted on influence of Instagram on female graduate career path. However, little if any research has explored the influence of Instagram on the career path of female journalism graduates. There was, therefore, need to investigate the influence of Instagram stories on the career path of female graduates of Multimedia University of Kenya.

2. Theoretical Review

This study was guided by two theories related to the study topic. These include Cultivation Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory.

A. Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory was developed in 1969 by communication scholar George Gerbner. It is a social concept that expounds on how exposure to media over time can shape a person's beliefs and perceptions about the world. The theory implies that media coverage of specific particular concerns shapes how individuals perceive the significance of those issues. Cultivation theorists' postulate that television or media can contribute intensely to long-term effects that slowly impact the audience. The prime focus of this theory falls on the influence of viewing on the viewer's attitudes as opposed to developing behavior. Moreover, the theory argues that television and media possess a small but significant effect on the belief and attitudes of society about society. For example, those who consume more media are more likely to be influenced by the contents. (Stein, 2021). Therefore, cultivation theory is relevant to this study because in the case of Instagram, this could imply that female journalism graduates who are exposed to a lot of messages or images about a particular type of career (like social media management or influencer marketing) may be more likely to see those careers as desirable or attainable (Stein, 2021). The concept of this theory is interwoven with the idea that female journalism graduates using Instagram are likely to be influenced by the social media platform in their career aspirations, especially, if they consume concepts associated with journalism careers.

B. Uses and Gratifications Theory

Gratification theory was founded by Elihu Katz and Jay Blumber in 1974. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is a communication theory that proposes that persons actively seek out and use media to fulfill their particular desires and needs (Kujur & Singh, 2020). The theory indicates that people customarily use media to satisfy five primary needs. These needs include relaxation, personal identity, entertainment, information and social interaction. First, people use media to relax and calm down such as listening to music or watching calming videos. Second, personal identity indicates that people use media to assist them in forming and maintaining their sense of self such as watching TV shows or listening to music that reflects their personal interests and values. Third, the need for entertainment implies that people use media for entertainment and to escape from everyday life, such as watching movies,

playing video games or reading novels. The fourth need is information, which means that people use media to obtain information about the world such as news, weather updates and educational content. Finally, the last need for social interaction infers that people use media to get information about the world such as news, weather updates and educational content. Therefore, this theory was relevant to the study because it posits that people choose which media to consume based on their needs and desires and are active and selective in their media use. Female journalism graduates use Instagram to find inspiration or learn more about the types of careers available to them (Kujur & Singh, 2020)

3. Literature Review

A. Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories are a social media feature that allows users to share temporary videos and photos that disappear after 24 hours. Instagram Stories are displayed in a slideshow format and can enhance with various creative tools like stickers, text and filters. The Instagram Stories feature also allows users to add location tags, music and hashtags to their stories. Stories are usually displayed at the top of users' Instagram feeds and viewers can swipe up a story to reply via direct message. Instagram Stories also provide features such as quizzes, polls and question stickers to prompt viewers' engagement (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019). Bozanta and Gorgun (2019) conducted a study on the impact of social media career decision-making among university students in Turkey indicated that Instagram stories intensely influenced learners' career paths. The study found that social media use, including Instagram stories, can provide access to career information and networking opportunities, influencing career decision-making among learners. The study also revealed that the ability of Instagram Stories to enable users to share creative content and information with their followers could influence followers' career path due to interaction with role models or influential personalities using Instagram to showcase their professionalism.

Williams and Brown (2021) conducted a study on the impact of Instagram stories on the career aspirations of young females. The primary objective of Williams and Brown's study was to ascertain the impact of Instagram Stories on the professional goals of young females. Targeting young females who actively use Instagram Stories, qualitative research techniques including interviews and focus groups were used to collect data. Their degree of story involvement, the accounts they follow for job-related information and the effect of such content on their professional ambitions were the main topics of the interview questions. The study's findings revealed that young females perceive Instagram stories as a significant wellspring of inspiration for their professional aspirations. They encounter certain tales that inspire them and provide them information about other career routes thanks to Instagram tales' interactive features. Young females can actively acquire knowledge about real-life experiences, success stories and challenges encountered by individuals in their desired industries through the use of Instagram stories. These interactions via Instagram

Stories have a favorable impact on their professional pathways because they expose them to other viewpoints and role models who motivate and direct them. Because Instagram Stories are interactive, there is a direct line of communication allowing young females to ask questions, get suggestions and get support from other aspirants and professionals in the field.

B. Empirical Review and Critique of Existing Literature

1) Instagram Stories

A study was conducted by VanDerslice (2016) on female online businesses and brands using Instagram Stories. The study utilized the qualitative visual ethnography research design. Purposive sampling method was used to select participants to take part in this study. The sample size for this study was 81 businesses that generated 222 Instagram Story posts. The study findings revealed fifteen themes and 21 in-depth descriptions that will offer future exploration based on the best practices for other female businesses to follow and customize based on their business background. Finally, the study suggested that females may be more prone to impulse purchasing than when it comes to clothing (as the study was limited to retail stores) or making purchases because of the connection to a particular value or belief. Vanderslice's study focused on how female online enterprises and businesses use Instagram Stories while this study analyzed the influence of Instagram on career path of female journalism graduates of Multimedia University of Kenya.

Another study was conducted by Li and Leckenby (2019) on the effects of Instagram Stories on Brand attitude and Purchase intention. The researchers applied experimental design and convenience sampling was used to select participants. Besides, the sample size for this study was 254 participants. The research findings indicated that brand familiarity and Instagram use positively influence brand attitude and purchase intention. Instagram Stories with higher perceived informativeness are more effective in enhancing brand attitude and purchase intention than those with lower perceived informativeness. However, the study recommended that marketers leverage Instagram Stories to enhance brand awareness, particularly for lesser-known brands. However, the current study focused on the influence of Instagram on the career path of female journalism graduates. The current study accentuated more on the impact of Instagram in shaping the career paths of female journalism graduates. For instance, this study deployed Instagram stories through content analysis to explore its influence on career paths of female journalism graduates.

Shang et al., (2020) conducted a study on the Impact of live interactions on user engagement with brand-generated Instagram Stories. The research study deployed the quasi-experimental research design. Moreover, the researchers used a convenience sampling approach, and the sample size for the study was 605 participants. The study outcome shows that Live interactions (e.g., Q &A sessions) in Instagram Stories positively influence user engagement, brand attitude and purchase intention. The effect is moderated by user involvement and perceived authenticity. Nevertheless, the study suggested that brands should use live interactions in Instagram Stories to enhance user engagement and brand attitude, particularly for high-involvement products. The study by Shang et al. employed the quasi-experimental research design while this research utilized the qualitative research design. In addition, this study delved into the realm of both positive and negative influences exerted by Instagram on the career aspirations of these graduates.

Lin et al. (2021) conducted a content analysis on Instagram Stories posted by political candidates in the 2018 United States of America midterm election. Non-probability sampling was used as the sampling approach in this study. Moreover, the 500 Instagram Stories posted by 85 political candidates were the selected sample size for the study. The study findings revealed that Political candidates used Instagram Stories to showcase their personal lives, campaign events and endorsements. For example, they used various interactive features like polls and stickers to engage with followers. Conversely, the study recommended that political candidates should leverage Instagram Stories to create a more personal and engaging image and use interactive features to encourage followers to participate in the campaign. While Lin et al. (2021) study focused on the content analysis of Instagram Stories posted by political candidates during the 2018 US midterm election, in this study content analysis was used to gather data from Instagram platforms on Instagram reels, advertisements and stories.

A study conducted by Kim and Lee (2022) examining the role of perceived informativeness and entertainment in enhancing users' brand attitude toward influencer-generated Instagram Stories. Quasi-experimental design was the research design for the study. The sampling method used in this study was Convenience sampling, and the sample size was 367 participants. Besides, the search findings indicated that perceived informativeness and entertainment positively influence users' brand attitude toward influencer-generated Instagram Stories. For instance, perceived informativeness is stronger for high-involvement products, while entertainment is stronger for low-involvement products. However, the study suggested that brands should collaborate with influencers to create informative and entertaining Instagram stories matching the product's involvement level. The study conducted by Kim and Lee (2022) explores the role of perceived informativeness and entertainment in enhancing users' brand attitude toward influencer-generated Instagram Stories. Conversely, the current research study concentrates on the effect of Instagram on the career selections of female journalism graduates. The concept indicates that this present study explores both the positive and negative influence of Instagram on female journalism graduates' career aspirations. For instance, the current study utilized Instagram stories features by using a content analysis approach to determine the impact of Instagram on the career path of female journalism graduates.

4. Findings

A. Influence of Instagram Stories on the Career Path of Female Graduates

Interview findings revealed that most of the participants had a positive influence of Instagram stories. One respondent indicated that they had participated in a recording and editing challenge that a media company had asked people to participate in, through their Instagram stories. The influence of Instagram Stories on the career paths of female graduates emerges as a significant aspect of their professional development.

Content analysis findings revealed that majority of the respondents are attracted to "career-related" content and they like to network with industry professionals to gain insights into the journalism field. For instance, in an in-depth interview one of the participants indicated that;

"The interactive and real-time nature of Live Rooms has provided a unique avenue for me to network, share experiences and stay updated on industry trends on a daily basis." – Participant P2

The extent of Instagram stories in shaping female graduates career paths is further suggested by participant 5 as follows, "Many journalism-related events, workshops, and conferences are promoted on Instagram. I have discovered and attended such events, which have provided networking opportunities, career insights, and sometimes direct job offers." - Participant P5

This finding reinforces Bozanta and Gorgun (2019) argument that Instagram stories, can provide access to career information and networking opportunities, influencing career decision-making among learners.

Instagram stories have made it possible for most of the female journalism graduates to interact with journalists who have made strides in the journalism field and has given them an opportunity to see behind the scenes of coming up with good programs. Moreover, respondents indicated that Instagram stories have helped them like their careers more because they interact daily with people who are already pursuing their careers. This has made them work even harder to get to where their mentors are. For instance, some of the respondents, who are photojournalists highlighted that they previously did not like their career choice because it is mostly considered to be male-oriented. However, after following and interacting with other industry professionals who are pursuing Photojournalism, they indicated that their Instagram stories looked very captivating, luxurious and they were encouraged that there is a better side to Photojournalism than meets the eye. On the other hand, most respondents indicated that sometimes what is portrayed on Instagram stories is not what happens in reality. Most of the respondents admitted to comparing their career progress to their peers. They stated that Instagram stories give them a lot of pressure because they feel that their peers are making bigger strides compared to them. Some admitted to not logging in to Instagram sometimes to maintain their sanity and focus on improving their careers as evidenced here;

"I have always felt the pressure to change my career path from social media management to becoming a news anchor because most of my peers are anchors and they keep posting a lavish lifestyle on Instagram." Participant P7

The finding suggests that social media can contribute to feelings of inadequacy for some users. This aligns with cultivation theory, which proposes that heavy media consumption can influence our perceptions of reality (Stein, 2021). For instance, Participant 7's response indicates that she may be swayed by the carefully crafted portrayals of success often seen on social media.

Overall, the findings of this study revealed that most of the respondents engage with Instagram stories daily and they mostly check them to get updated about their career paths and improve themselves in this regard. Participants demonstrated consistent interaction with Instagram Stories, showcasing a notable frequency of engagement with this feature. This heightened interaction suggests that Instagram Stories play a pivotal role in shaping the participants' perceptions, aspirations and decisions regarding their career paths. This implies that female journalism graduates depend on Instagram to compare their achievements with their peers and improve where need be. These findings concur with the Uses and Gratification theory, which proposes that persons actively seek out and use media to fulfill their particular desires and needs (Kujur & Singh, 2020). Similarly, these study findings align with those of Williams and Brown (2021), which revealed that young females perceive Instagram stories as a significant wellspring of inspiration for their professional aspirations. They encounter certain tales that inspire them and provide them information about other career routes thanks to Instagram tales' interactive features.

B. Frequency of Instagram Stories

Interview findings revealed that Instagram stories had the highest viewership in terms of daily interaction, compared to other types of posts on Instagram. The research findings accentuate the persistent and regular use of Instagram among all participants, emphasizing its prominence as a popular and frequently accessed platform in the context of their engagement with career-related content. The unanimous statement of regular use implies that Instagram has become an integral part of the participants' daily routines, suggesting its significance as a primary source of career-related information and inspiration. The frequency of use aligns with the positive impact reported earlier, emphasizing that the consistent and regular interaction with Instagram contributes significantly to its role in influencing the career paths of female journalism graduates from the Multimedia University of Kenya. This collective pattern of frequent engagement highlights the platform's efficacy in meeting the informational and motivational needs of the participants, positioning Instagram as a central hub for shaping and reinforcing their aspirations within the field of journalism.

The research findings illuminate the significant influence of Instagram Stories on the career paths of female journalists, portraying a dynamic and multifaceted impact. Participants consistently engaged with Instagram Stories, with one standout respondent demonstrating a notable frequency of fifteen interactions with this feature in a day. This heightened

interaction suggests a profound engagement with the narrative format provided by Instagram Stories, indicating its significance in shaping the participants' experience and perception of the platform. The varying counts among participants offer nuanced insights into the extent to which Instagram Stories play a role in influencing their career aspirations and decisions.

One prominent influence identified is the role of Instagram Stories in fostering a sense of connection and networking within the journalism industry. One of the participants noted that,

"Stories provide a platform for direct interactions with industry professionals, facilitating connections that prove instrumental in my career growth."- Participant P2

The real-time, ephemeral nature of Stories contributed to a more authentic and immediate form of communication, allowing female journalists to establish relationships, seek advice and gain valuable insights into the industry. Overall, the research findings underscore how Instagram Stories serve as a powerful tool in shaping the professional trajectories of female journalism graduates, not only by providing information but by creating opportunities for networking and mentorship within the dynamic landscape of journalism.

C. Types of Instagram Stories Followed

Most participants noted that they interact with content that is informative and educative so as to nourish their academic desires. However, some participants noted that they interact with Instagram stories that are entertaining to divert from their daily busy schedules.

"I follow media outlets and Instagram accounts that provide tips for elevating my broadcast skills in journalism career. These kinds of stories are educative in nature and they always fulfil my need to learn." - Participant P1

"I am a news anchor so I follow most news outlets and individual news anchors on their personal accounts. News anchors and reporters especially, like Larry Madowo of CNN, motivate me to up my game." - Participant P10

This finding concurs with the Uses and Gratifications Theory that proposes that persons actively seek out and use media to fulfill their particular desires and needs (Kujur & Singh, 2020). The theory indicates that people customarily use media to satisfy five primary needs. Female journalism graduates, therefore, use Instagram to find inspiration and learn more about the types of careers available to them.

D. Influence of Instagram Stories on Career Aspirations

The Interview research findings emphasize the substantial influence of Instagram Stories on the career aspirations of female journalism graduates from the Multimedia University of Kenya. Participants demonstrated a noteworthy frequency of interaction with Instagram Stories, with the most active respondent engaging in an impressive fifteen interactions per day while the least engaging participant interacted with Instagram stories thrice a day. This indicates a keen utilization of the narrative format provided by Instagram Stories, suggesting that the feature plays a pivotal role in shaping the participants' experiences and perceptions of the platform. The

varying counts among participants offer a nuanced perspective on the extent of Instagram Stories' impact on their career aspirations, emphasizing the diverse ways in which this feature is leveraged by individuals pursuing careers in journalism.

Moreover, the content analysis findings show the unanimous statement of "regular" and "persistent" use of Instagram among all fifteen participants implies that Instagram Stories have become an integral and habitual part of their daily routines. This habitual engagement suggests that Instagram, particularly through its Stories feature, has evolved into a primary source of career-related information and inspiration for these female journalism graduates.

"I'm attracted to them because I'm also striving to be an influencer and regular IG stories help in building a sense of community among followers. It's an opportunity for creators to strengthen their relationship with their audience." – Participant P6

Overall, the collective pattern of frequent interaction highlights the platform's efficacy in meeting the informational and motivational needs of the participants, positioning Instagram Stories as a central and influential tool for shaping and reinforcing their career aspirations within the dynamic field of journalism. This finding aligns with Williams and Brown (2021) finding that young females can actively acquire knowledge about real-life experiences, success stories and challenges encountered by individuals in their desired industries through the use of Instagram stories. These interactions via Instagram Stories have a favorable impact on their professional pathways because they expose them to other viewpoints and role models who motivate and direct them.

E. Instances Where a Career Path was Pursued as Result of Instagram Stories

One compelling instance illustrating the tangible influence of Instagram Stories on a career path involves a female journalism graduate named Sarah (Participant P10). Sarah, having graduated in 2020, actively engaged with Instagram Stories, particularly those shared by established journalists and media professionals. Through the Stories feature, she gained insights into the daily routines, challenges and successes of journalists working in various fields. Inspired by the narratives shared on Instagram Stories, Sarah decided to pursue a career in investigative journalism, drawn to the impactful stories and issues highlighted by her role models on the platform.

Sarah's journey exemplifies how Instagram Stories played a crucial role in shaping her career aspirations. The behind-the-scenes glimpses, career advice and success stories shared through Instagram Stories provided her with valuable guidance and inspiration, ultimately steering her toward a specific career path she might not have considered otherwise as she puts it;

"Instagram Stories featuring successful freelancers, independent journalists and startups have encouraged me to consider entrepreneurial paths and pursue projects that align with my interests and values." - Participant P10

This real-life scenario showcases the tangible impact of Instagram Stories in influencing career choices, demonstrating the platform's role as a catalyst for personal and professional

development among female journalism graduates.

5. Conclusion

The study reveals the intricate relationship between the Instagram platform and female journalism graduates from the Multimedia University of Kenya and Instagram. The platform, through its diverse features, emerges as a powerful influencer in shaping career paths.

Respondents indicated that Instagram stories have helped them like their careers more because they interact daily with people who are already pursuing their careers. This has made them work even harder to get to where their mentors are.

6. Recommendations

A. *Curriculum Integration of Instagram Skills*

This training should encompass the basic mechanics of using Instagram and strategies for leveraging features such as Instagram Stories for career development. By aligning coursework with the dynamic nature of social media, graduates will be better equipped to navigate and utilize these platforms effectively in their professional endeavors.

B. *Professional Development Workshops*

Organize workshops and training sessions for female journalism graduates to enhance their skills in utilizing Instagram features strategically. These workshops could cover topics such as content creation for Instagram Stories, effective utilization of Instagram Stories for networking, and understanding the nuances of sponsored content through Instagram Stories.

C. *Mentorship Programs with Instagram Influencers*

This initiative aims to provide personalized guidance, career advice and insights into the realities of the industry. The mentorship programs should emphasize transparency and realism in portraying career paths. Through these connections, graduates can gain a more accurate understanding of diverse career journeys within journalism and receive support in navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by the field.

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