

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE JOURNALISTS: A CASE STUDY OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Journalism in the world is one of the most challenging jobs and in Pakistan it become harder for journalists to survive in the field specifically the female journalists. Present research study is based on survey technique to explore and investigate prospects and challenges faced by female journalists in Pakistan. The population for this research study was female journalists working in different media organizations of Islamabad. According to Islamabad press club there are 205 female journalists working in Islamabad. The sample size was 32 respondents. Which is 15% of the total population. A close ended questionnaire was used for data collection and analysis. SPSS statistical software is used for data analysis and interpretation. Feminism theory is most relevant theory which support this research study. Data tabulation and its exclusive analysis reveals that 50% respondents working in Television. The exclusive analysis of the data also reveals that most of the female journalists feel insecurity while working in the media organizations. Data analysis also reveals that more than 78% respondents faced abusive language from their co-worker and seniors. The empirical analysis also reveals that harassment from the co-workers put them under pressure to change the profession.

Keywords: Prospects, Challenges, Female Journalists, Abusive language, harassment

Introduction

A balanced society needs journalism which is considered as the fundamental building block. Free flow of information provided to the public by news media has turned the media into free flow market (McQuail, 2013). By women journalism we mean the content produced and written by females for the females and society (Naturanjan, 1981). Females in any society or region play very important and integral roles. The domestic roles of females as daughters, wife and sister is no doubt a challenging one in any society. The females considered as working female's role and place in any society or area create so many challenges and hurdles (Holmes, 2018). Developing societies like Pakistan where new horizon is opened for females as professional and working females to contribute positively in the society (Singh, 2018). Presently, females are no longer confined to soft professions rather they are taking more challenging and dynamic fields like media, business, banking and marketing (Basu, 2018).

In developed societies females are working side by side with males for promotion and development of the country and society. Pakistan is developing country and half of the population is consisted of females. However, the role of professional females in Pakistan is no doubt limited and restricted due to traditional bonds and values. more and more females are pushed into the higher and authoritative places in newsroom, and they are changing the way of dealings with challenging task (Iqbal. I, Iqbal. A, 2017). Electronic media in Pakistan got boom during the first decade of 21st century. The job opportunities for females not only increased but they are posted on highly professional positions which are challenging for them to tackle. Even though the females have got positions in the media outlets but still they are facing the big challenge and that is gender discrimination.

The major issues of discrimination, harassment balancing the workload and gender biasness are hindering the women to excel in the field of media (UKS 2009). Present research study is based on survey research technique to investigate and explore the hurdles, problems and challenges faced by working female's journalist in the world specifically in Pakistan. In Pakistan female journalists suffer from different type of issues like emotional, mental, and physical threats from the co-workers and people with who they work

with. Sexual harassment faced by female and in return they don't received support from civil society and society, or from other female colleagues, or the top management of the organization. everyone wants to

avoid the conspicuous eye on them. The sad reality is that, only 2% of honor crime brought on the surface rest of 98% is hidden which is no doubt a great concern and sad reality (Arif, 2016).

Objectives of the Study:

Following are the major objectives of the study:

- To explore role of female journalists in the media organizations.
- To document experience of female journalists in the field.
- To investigate challenges faced by female journalists in Pakistan.
- To document harassment issues faced by female journalists during duties.
- To investigate role of media organizations to protect the rights of female journalists in Pakistan.
- To investigate prospects of female journalists in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study:

History reveals that Journalist in Pakistan are facing issues and problems from the start. Journalists especially female journalists facing so many problems to survive in the media industry. These problems include life threats, harassments and many other. Female journalists in Pakistan are playing different roles as reporters, assignment editor, anchors, and producer. Pakistani media industry is male dominant industry therefore, it is very difficult for female journalist to survive in the industry. However, much has been written about issue of harassment, insecurity faced by female journalists in the past. Present research study is based on challenges and prospects faced by female journalist in Pakistan specially in Islamabad. Therefore, this research has gained added significance due to challenges faced by female journalists during their professional responsibilities.

Hypothesis of the Study:

Following are the hypothesis of this research study:

H₀₁: It is more likely female journalists are playing an important role in the field of media.

H₀₂: It is more likely female journalists have great experience of the field.

H₀₃: It is more likely female journalists face so many challenges while working in the field of media industry.

H₀₄: It is more likely female media industry is not playing its role to overcome the issue of rights of female journalists.

H₀₅: It is more likely higher the experience in the field less the harassment faced by female journalist.

H₀₆: It is more likely to work in the field more the threats from society.

H₀₇: It is more likely media organizations are not playing their effective role to safeguard the rights of female journalists.

H₀₈: It is more likely future of female journalists is brighter in Pakistan.

Review of Literature:

Review of literature in any field provides researchers with the opportunity to study past research conducted on specific issue or issued related to the study. A researcher or scholar reviews literature for better understanding of his/her research study. For this specific research data was collected from different research articles, Journals, and books to create better understanding of the subject under consideration.

Females are given less value and mistreated in any field because they are in minorities. The central to discrimination of female is less control in resources in all institution specifically media. It is also worth noting that the participation of female in media is very limited (Reeves & Baden, 2002). Large number of women are entering in media education, and they find it attractive, but their presence is negligible in the field work as compared to total number of passing out from universities (Basu, 2018).

People in the newsroom pass negative remarks to female colleagues while females journalists try to avoid such type of conversation. Such type of behavior results in detachment of female journalists from the field (Robinson, 2008). Another important aspect of females to join Journalism as profession is the difficulty in balance between family and professionalism (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). A study found that starting journalism as a profession for female is no doubt challenging job. Females face different types of gender discrimination at the start of the profession specifically in the field of electronic media. Due to gender discrimination the opportunities for female in the field of media is very limited to avail (Iqbal Iqra & Iqbal Ayesha, 2016).

Gender discrimination persists at every level of employment in news media organizations. Matias & Wallach (2015) says that the percentage of female journalists in US news media organization has remained at 37% in the years 2001-2015. According to UNESCO documents, two-third of the world work is performed by female, but still, they earn only one-third of the income. The documents further reveal that

women consist of two-third of the world's uneducated and have less than one-hundredth of property (UNESCO, 2009). The Global Media Monitoring Project's (GMMP, 2015), exclusive analysis of the report reveals that women proportion and participation in the international media context less than 24% of the employ of the media are female.

A study argues that female journalists facing so many issues in which the dominant one is the discrimination in the male dominant environment of media. As a female they deemed to work in emergency, unable to work in extra hours (De Bruin, 2004). The International Federation of Journalists (2018-19) ranks Pakistan as the fourth most dangerous country for journalists. The federation declares Pakistan as the sixth worst for female journalists (2019). In 2018, the Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) highlighted Pakistan as second from bottom, ranking it as 148 out of 149 countries (Erum Hafeez et al, 2021).

Female Discrimination in Pakistani Media:

The role of the media in the present time is as the watchdog. A study reveals that in a country like Pakistan where females are restricted to participate as females in very few professions because the society is based on purely cultural and religious beliefs and taboos (Ghulam Shabir et al, 2009). Female journalists are facing harassment from their colleagues and coworkers including abusive language and threats (Iqbal Iqra & Iqbal Ayesha, 2016). Further this study reveals that sexual harassment is widely spread in the media industry of Pakistan to restrict the female journalists to work and progress. Another study argues that in an Islamic society females have to face emotional concept of modesty in Islamic doctrine which become a great hurdle for them to work within the modern and advance structure of organizations (Syed, Ali & Winstanley 2005).

In Pakistan female journalists are facing tremendous physical and mental challenges and they face different types of constraints to practice freedom of expression (Jamil, S. 2017). There are so many issues faced by working females in media including turbulence in terms of their job, freedom of expression, security lapses and privacy (Qamar et al., 2020). A strong organizational policies and support of management is required. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, female journalists do not often find a conducive and supportive working environment in mainstream media organization mainly due to male-dominated society and culture. Only very few media organizations, especially the old and well reputed media organizations have effective and successful policies that address and implement gender discrimination and harassment efficiently. As a study reveals, only 41.8% of our survey respondents have the opinion that their workplaces have strong and effective policies to tackle harassment and other issues related to female journalists (Hafeez & Zahid ,2021).

Theoretical Framework:

This research study relates with many other communication theories, but the researcher opted "The concepts of Feminist theory" to justify the proposed research topic and find relevant conclusions. Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields of the world. It works in a variety of disciplines, including, sociology, economics, women's studies, literary criticism, and art history etc. basic assumption of the Feminist theory is to understand gender discrimination, inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality at large. While providing a critique of these social and political relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests. Themes explored in feminist theory include abusive language, discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, and hurdle in workplace (especially sexual objectification), oppression, and patriarchy. Therefore, this research study is very much relevant to this theory.

Methods

Research is a well-organized, scientific, and systematic method of finding solutions to a wide variety of issues and problems under consideration. methodology is an attempt made to obtain a solution or way out to the problem by collecting various and different types of data and systematic and scientific analysis of the multiple aspects of the issues related.

In this research, the researcher used survey method to find relevant facts and 100 questionnaires were distributed among the female journalists of Islamabad. The researcher used google forms for the purpose of survey and shared the questionnaire with the journalists of Islamabad and responses were collected. Unfortunately, only 32 responses were recorded, and it was not possible to collect data by hand due to shortage of time and resources.

The population of this study are female journalists working in different media organizations from Islamabad. According to National Press Club Islamabad, there is total 3182 registered journalists in Islamabad and out of these the number of female journalists is 205. Survey questionnaires were distributed

in 100 female journalists but only 32 responses are recorded which makes 15% of the total female journalists' population. Later, the collected data was analyzed by using SPSS statistical software.

Data Analysis:

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Age				
20 to 25	22	68.8	68.8	68.8
25 to 30	7	21.9	21.9	90.6
30 to 35	1	3.1	3.1	93.8
35 to 40	1	3.1	3.1	96.9
40 above	1	3.1	3.1	100
Qualification				
FSC	7	21.9	21.9	21.9
BA	16	50	50	71.9
MA	2	6.2	6.2	78.1
MSC	6	18.8	18.8	96.9
MPhil	1	3.1	3.1	100
Organization				
Local	9	28.1	28.1	28.1
National	20	62.5	62.5	90.6
International	3	9.4	9.4	100
Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Age				
20 to 25	22	68.8	68.8	68.8
25 to 30	7	21.9	21.9	90.6
30 to 35	1	3.1	3.1	93.8
35 to 40	1	3.1	3.1	96.9
40 above	1	3.1	3.1	100
Qualification				
FSC	7	21.9	21.9	21.9
BA	16	50	50	71.9
MA	2	6.2	6.2	78.1
MSC	6	18.8	18.8	96.9
MPhil	1	3.1	3.1	100
Organization				
Local	9	28.1	28.1	28.1
National	20	62.5	62.5	90.6
International	3	9.4	9.4	100

Present research study is based on survey technique to investigate and explore the challenges and threats face by female journalists in Pakistan. The data was collected according to the objective of the study. The quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics.

Table#1

N= 32

Table one indicates that 68.8% of the population of respondents belongs to the age from 20 to 25 years. Whereas 21.9% are from age group 25 to 30 years. The table also indicates that 3.1% people belong to the age groups 30 to 35, 35 to 40 and 40 above, each. Table one also explains that 50% respondents have done BA, 21.9% respondents have completed their intermediate (FA/FSC), 21.9% respondents have done their MSc/MPhil combined and 6.2% respondents have done their MA. Table one also reveals the fact that 62.5% female journalist from research sample are working in national news organizations, 28.1% respondents are working in local news organizations. The table also reveals that only 9.4% of respondents are working with international media.

Table#2

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Duration				
0 to Less than 2 years	20	62.5	62.5	62.5
2 to Less than 4 years	4	12.5	12.5	75
4 to Less than 6 years	2	6.2	6.2	81.2
More than 6 years	6	18.8	18.8	100

N=32

The above Table explains the fact that 62.5% of respondents have less than 2 years of experience in the field. The table also reveals that only 18.8% female respondents are having experience of more than 6 years. The table also indicates that 12.5% of female respondents are having two to four years of experience. Similarly, 6.2% of respondents have five to six years of experience of the field.

Table#3

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Designation				
Reporter	14	43.8	43.8	43.8
Assignment editor	8	25	25	68.8
Assistant Producer	2	6.2	6.2	75
Associate Producer	3	9.4	9.4	84.4
Any other	5	15.6	15.6	100

N=32

The above table reveals that 43.8% of female journalists from the research population sample are working as a reporter in different media organizations, whereas 25% of respondents are working as Assignment Editors, 6.2% respondents are working as Assistant Producer and 9.4% respondents are working as Associate Producers. The table also contains the option of 'Any Other' which has the ratio of 15.6%. The jobs included are News Caster & Anchor Person.

Table#3

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
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Challenges					
Insecurity	17	53.1	53.1	53.1	53.1
Abusive language	8	25	25	78.1	78.1
Harassment	3	9.4	9.4	87.5	87.5
Any other	4	12.5	12.5	100	100

N=32

This table reveals the fact that 53.1% female respondents feel insecurity during their work. 12.5% females face the problem of unethical language by males and adjustment in the male dominated environment of media. table also reveals that 25% females face the problem of abusive language, and 9.4% female journalist of the sample population are harassed during their work.

Table#4

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Insecurity	Not at All	5	15.6	15.6
	To Some Extent	23	71.9	87.5
	Regularly	4	12.5	100

N=32

The above table reveals that 71.9% respondents feel insecurity to some extent, 15.6% respondents do not feel any insecurity issues in field. and 12.5% female respondents regularly feels insecurity during their work.

Table#5

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Abusive language from Co-workers	0 to less than 2 times	25	78.1	78.1
	2 to less than 3 times	5	15.6	93.8
	3 to less than 4 times	1	3.1	96.9
	more than 4 times	1	3.1	100

N=32

The above table reveals that 78.1% respondents faced abusive language less than 2 times from their co-workers. It also reveals that 15.6% respondents faced abusive language from 2 to less than 3 times. Similarly, the ratio of respondents who faced abusive language 3 to 4 times or more than 4 times is 3.1% respectively.

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Harassment from co-workers				
0 to less than 2 times	23	71.9	71.9	71.9
2 to less than 3 times	2	6.2	6.2	78.1
3 to less than 4 times	4	12.5	12.5	90.6
More than 4 times	3	9.4	9.4	100

Table#6

N=32

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Harassment from society				
0 to less than 2 times	20	62.5	62.5	62.5
2 to less than 3 times	6	18.8	18.8	81.2
3 to less than 4 times	2	6.2	6.2	87.5
More than 4 times	4	12.5	12.5	100

The above table reveals that 62.5% respondents faced harassment issues less than 2 times from the society. It also reveals that 18.8% respondents faced harassment more than two times from society. Similarly, 6.2% respondents faced harassment more than three times from society. And 12.5% respondents faced harassment issues for more than 4 times from the society.

Table#7

N=32

This table reveals that 71.9% of respondents faced harassment less than two times from their co-workers. 12.5% respondents claim to be harassed by their co-workers more than 3 times. And 9.4% respondents faced harassment issues more than four times from their co-workers. 6.2% claim that they have been harassed more than two times by their colleagues.

Table#8

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Threats effect ability of work				
Not at All	7	21.9	21.9	21.9
To Some Extent	8	25	25	46.9
Much	10	31.2	31.2	78.1

Very Much 7 21.9 21.9 100

N=32

The above reveals that, 31.2% claims that threats highly affect their ability of work. 21.9% of respondents claim that threats do not affect their ability to work. Whereas 25% respondents claim that threats affect their ability to work to some extent. Table also reveals that 21.9% respondents claims that threats very highly affect their ability of work.

Table#9

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Big Challenge				
To Some Extent	4	12.5	12.5	12.5
Agree	13	40.6	40.6	53.1
Strongly Agree	15	46.9	46.9	100

N=32

This table reveals that 46.9% respondents strongly agree that journalism is a big challenge for females as a profession, 40.6% respondent agree to the statement that journalism is a big challenge for female journalists. 12.5% respondents believe that journalism as a profession for female is a big challenge to some extent.

Table#10

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Courage to fight				
Disagree	1	3.1	3.1	3.1
To Some Extent	8	25	25	28.1
Agree	16	50	50	78.1
Strongly Agree	7	21.9	21.9	100

N=32

The above table shows that 50% believes that female journalist has the courage to fight against such people, 25% believe that they can fight up to some extent. Table also reveals that 21.9% respondents strongly agree that female journalist have the courage to fight against such people. Only 3.1% respondents disagree that female journalists do not have courage to fight against such people and acts.

Table#11

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Future of Female Journalists				
Disagree	4	12.5	12.5	12.5
To some extent	8	25	25	37.5
Agree	18	56.2	56.2	93.8
Strongly Agree	2	6.2	6.2	100

N=32

This table reveals that 56.2% respondents agrees that journalism is a brighter field for female journalists, 25% agrees to some extent. 12.5% respondents disagree that journalism is not a brighter field for females. It also reveals 6.2% respondents strongly agree to the fact that journalism is a brighter field for female journalists.

Table#12

Values	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Laws to Safeguard Female journalist rights				
Disagree	3	9.4	9.4	9.4
To some extent	3	9.4	9.4	18.8
Agree	9	28.1	28.1	46.9
Strongly Agree	17	53.1	53.1	100

N=32

Table above reveals that 53.1% respondents strongly agree that media organizations should implement ethical standards to safeguard rights of female journalists. Table also shows 28.1% respondents agree that media organizations should implement ethical standards to safeguard rights of female journalists. 9.4% respondents disagree that media organizations should implement ethical standards to safeguard rights of female journalists. And 9.4% respondents think that media organizations should implement ethical standards up to some extent to safeguard rights of female journalists.

Table#13

Correlations			
		How long you are working?	Harassment from co-workers?
How long you are working?	Pearson Correlation	1	.683**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	32	32
Harassment from co-workers?	Pearson Correlation	.683**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	32	32

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's Correlation test was applied to test the level of experience and harassment face by female journalists from the co-worker. The results of the test signify the relationship between two variables. It means that higher the experience of working in media organization higher the level of harassment faced by female journalists in Pakistan.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Data tabulation and its exclusive analysis reveals that more than 68% respondents has the age between 20 to 25 which simply reflects most of the female journalists working in Islamabad are young. It is worth

noting that overall majority of the female journalist playing the role of reporters as compared to other roles. The exclusive data also reveals that female journalist in Islamabad not only playing different roles as journalists but also more than 45% regularly cover the beat and it support our first hypothesis i.e. "It is more likely female journalists playing important role in the field of media". In the process of data collection facts are found revealing and worth noting that overall majority of the female journalists working in Islamabad have the experience less than 2 years and exclusive analysis of data reject our second hypothesis i.e. "It is more likely female journalists have vast experience of the field".

Data tabulation and subsequent analysis determine that overall majority of the female journalists feel insecurity while covering any beat or working within the media organization. The empirical data support our third hypothesis i.e. "It is more likely female journalists face so many challenges while working in the field of media industry". The exclusive analysis the data and empirical findings reveals that overall majority of the female journalists working in different media organizations faced threats more than two times from the society and data supports our Fourth hypothesis i.e., "it is more likely female journalists often face threats from the society when working in the field".

Data tabulation and its analysis reveals that overall majority of the female journalists working in different media organizations in Islamabad are of the opinion that media organizations playing less role to protect the rights of the female journalists. They think media organizations should regularly play their role to support female journalists' rights. However, the empirical findings of the data neither support nor rejected our fifth hypothesis i.e. "It is more likely media organizations are not playing their effective role to safeguard the rights of female journalists". Spearman's correlation test was applied to investigate is there any relationship between experience of female journalists and harassment face by female journalists. The empirical findings of the test signify our sixth hypothesis i.e. "It is more likely less the experience in the field higher the harassment, threats etc. faced by female journalist". Data tabulation and exclusive analysis of the data reveals that overall majority of the female journalists thinks that their future in Pakistan is brighter and no doubt they will find new ways to work in the media industry and it supports our seventh hypothesis i.e. "It is more likely future of female journalists is brighter in Pakistan".

Conclusion:

Keeping in view the above findings and facts in mind It is concluded that female journalists who are working in Pakistan are facing so many problems and issues specially the issue of insecurity and harassment is the major and important one. It is also worth noting that majority of the female journalists have less experience, but they think that their future in media industry is brighter. They are also committed to serve different roles as reporter, anchor, editor, news caster and producer etc.

It is also concluded that harassment issue must be taken up from media organization because this is purely based on organization to safeguard the rights of female journalists because when they feel secure no doubt, they will participate in the field more actively and efficiently. It is also worth noting that society can also play its role to support female journalists so that they can work in the field without any fear or insecurity.

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