

# **Women Journalists in Electronic Media: An Analysis of Working Conditions of Karachi based News Channels**

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## **Abstract**

This empirical study has used survey method to assess four specific dimensions of working conditions for women journalists in all the Karachi based news channels. Theoretical frame work is based on liberal feminism theory. 79 women journalists associated with various Karachi based news channels are part of this survey research as respondents. Thus using the chi-square test and Pearson correlation test, the findings of this research display a promising picture to some extent revealing the positive and cooperative behavior of male colleagues towards the women journalists at the workplace.

**Keywords:** Gender discrimination, patriarchal society, male dominance, stereotype thinking, Women Harassment, job security, male colleagues, cooperative behavior, soft beats,

## **Introduction**

Media in Pakistan have a long history of state repression and monopolies especially electronic media that remain state owned and controlled for almost first fifty years in seventy years history of the Country. Commencing more than 53 years with a single TV channel Pakistan Television (PTV) in 1964, the Pakistani electronic media landscape has branched out into 89 channels licensed by Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority today (PEMRA, 2015). In relation with the viewership of Television in Pakistan, the medium is pervasive to the extent that today a Pakistani spends an average of two hours a day watching television (Gallup, 2015).

The electronic media observed a boost during the year 2002 when the then President General Pervez Musharraf liberalized the electronic media sphere by allowing private ownership or deregulation of radio and television in the country. Many attributed this move to his enlightened moderation approach while others believe that it was due to the realization of failure of mass medium during Kargil war.

After the promulgation of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance in January 2002, the rapid growth and fundamental changes took place in the country's broadcast industry. Opening up of country's air waves for private ownership brought a revolution in the media land scape.

In the course of disseminating information, the private news channels have mushroomed the new trends of massive live coverage and blatant talk shows spilling the beans regarding the

covert information of the opposing political groups and has garnered the attention of the public ever since.

As the opening of the private news channels in Pakistan posited new job opportunities, along with men, women were hired by different news channels. Thus today, women in news channels are working as the reporters, assignment editors, copy editors, web editors, news producers, researchers, director current affairs, manager operations, senior data analysts, monitoring officers, sub-editors, associate producers and the bureau chief as well. Undoubtedly women serve as the backbone of any society. Women play active role in upbringing of the society but despite their skills and aptitude, they have to face challenges when it comes to their professional obligations.

Despite the patriarchal norms of Pakistani society, women are thriving in majority of the professions. The practice of women taking part in beefing the country's economy up has been executed since long ago in the West. Last few decades have witnessed this trend is brought to life in Pakistan as well (zia, et.al, 2016, pp1-2).

The present study highlights the four important dimensions of the working conditions of women in electronic media depending on the severity and non-severity of the conditions, the results will be analyzed. Conventionally, a few studies have highlighted the problems and the issues of harassment faced by the women journalists in Pakistani television like in a report of Alliance Against Sexual Harassment AASHA inferred the ratio 93% of women journalists have been subjected to harassment (*Ibid*).

However the present study has fallen out to highlight and analyze the ground realities based on the working conditions of the women journalists on job in all the television channels of Karachi. The core purpose of carrying out this study is to examine the working conditions of women journalists on duty in the news channels in Karachi.

### **Review of the Literature**

The cases of gender discrimination in Pakistan have appeared sporadically in the researches. Channar (2010) throws light in this regard by analyzing the possible discrimination against women in the work force through ‘Sticky Floor and Glass Ceiling effects’ and evaluating the impact of gender discrimination on women employees. The reality comes forth that not only women journalists faced discriminatory behavior from their bosses and authorities, but also from their colleagues in the workplace. It was concluded from the research that education guards the women against discrimination, i.e. the higher qualification of women, lower will be the discrimination against them and vice versa, in both (private and government organizations. Women having same credentials and experience are given less promotions as compared to their male counterparts.

In 2009 The report, “More Women in Media: The Way Forward”, consists of the deliberations and recommendations, that are a result of the research carried out by the UKS Research Center on Women and Media reveals the problems of women journalists in print, radio and television networks by taking individual interviews of women journalists of these media. The research argues about the management’s trends to ignore women journalists when it comes

to hard news beats, such as politics and the economy. These are the assignments, which help journalists get promotions to managerial positions. Women's status in the media and the issue of gender equality has progressed over the years, due to decades of research, advocacy and political lobbying at the international level (UKS, 2005).

Rlan van Den Wlnjgaard found out in his research that male colleagues doubt women's potentiality; and they see them merely as sexual objects and the moment women pose a threat to them, they give them masculine nicknames. Instead of taking a critical look at their attitudes or even changing them, male colleagues cling to the prejudice that being a journalist and being a woman do not go together. This research titled "Women as Journalists: Incompatibility of Roles" outlines the situation of women journalists in Senegal (Wlnjgaard, 1992).

### **Working conditions**

According to the US Law and Legal Definition the term 'working condition' is defined as, "the working environment and all existing circumstances affecting labor in the workplace, including job hours, physical aspects, legal rights and responsibilities" (US Legal, 2006).

On the other hand the International Labor Organization describes, "Generally speaking, working conditions cover a broad range of topics and issues, from working time (hours of work, rest periods, and work schedules) to remuneration, as well as the physical

conditions and mental demands that exist in the workplace” (ILO, 1996).

In the light of the definitions above and examining similar studies this research has monitored the following four dimensions of the working conditions of women journalists at the Karachi based television news channels:

- i. Behavior of male colleagues towards women journalists.
- ii. The job security for women journalists.
- iii. Marginalization of women journalists to the soft beats.
- iv. Adverse effects of gender discrimination on the performance of women journalists.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical perspective of the research includes ideas along with the substance of the relevant academic literature which provides a better understanding for the research problem.

### **Liberal Feminist Theory**

As this research aims at highlighting the problems faced by women journalists while carrying out their duty, the theory which is directly linked to the research problem is the Liberal Feminist Theory. Liberal Feminists advocate the vision of individual independence, yielding women their right of living and opting for their choice in every sphere of life. It argues that “society has a false belief that women are by nature less intellectually and physically capable than men” (Pasque & Wimmer, 2011, p.15).

This theory is about the concept which believes almost all individuals ought to be free to discover equal opportunities and legal rights. They oppose the mass society questioning women's competence. Arguably, this theory negates the belief that women on the basis of their gender should be rendered with low key tasks.

Judith Lorber (1997) asserts about the equivalence of men and women, the liberal feminism theory pertain to the zero difference between men and women. If the differences are zero then they should also be dealt equally by the law. In a society both genders should bear the same and equal educational and work rights and opportunities.

### **Objectives of the study**

- i. To find out the behavior of male journalists with their female colleague journalists.
- ii. To figure out the permanent status of women workforce in news channels.
- iii. To evaluate the perception, if the women journalists are confined to the soft beats.
- iv. To assess the impact of gender discrimination on the performance of women journalists in the television news channels.

### **Hypotheses**

The four hypotheses have been devised for the study:

- H<sub>1</sub>. Women journalists are assigned soft beats due to their gender.  
H<sub>2</sub>. Women journalists have job security.

H<sub>3</sub>. Women journalists say that their male colleagues are cooperative with them.

H<sub>4</sub>. Gender discrimination adversely affects the performance of women journalists.

### **Research Methodology**

This research has adopted the Quantitative research method using the Survey as the data collection tool. The survey is conducted at all the television news channels of Karachi. All the women journalists working in the television news channels of Karachi were the targeted population for the survey. The respondents were asked to answer the close ended questionnaires. The research tool of questionnaire with 15 questions was designed on the Guttman or Cumulative measurement scale. The measurement levels of nominal and ordinal level were used. Nevertheless, the nominal level was used mostly. The researchers have conducted the survey with the 19 television news channels, names enlisted below.

Geo news, ARY news, Channel 24, PTV, 92 news hd, Samaa TV, Jaag TV, Abb takk news, Vsh news, Express TV, Dunya news, Sindh TV, Bol news, Neo News TV Channel, Dharti TV, Neo News TV Channel, Metro One news, Awami Awaz and Dawn News.

A total of 79 women journalists responded to the questionnaires representing 95% of all the news channels of Karachi. The other 5% didn't respond.

Method of Non-Probability sampling i.e.: Snowball Sampling technique has been adopted, as Patrick Biernacki and Dan Waldorf

explains that the method of Snowball Sampling yields a study sample through referral chain made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics or links that are of research interest (Patrick Biernacki, 1981).

Thus, the researchers reached out to the every news channel in Karachi for the purpose of conducting the survey with the help of the chain referral process of acquaintances possessed by the former channel's respondent or bureau chief.

The results are calculated and statistically represented using the method of *nonparametric statistical procedures* with *one sample chi-square test* and *Pearson Correlation coefficient*.

The working conditions of the women journalists were measured by means of the questions inquiring about their job security, the behavior of male colleagues, stereotyped attitudes towards women and the effects of gender discrimination on the performance of women journalists.

## **Findings and Results**

### **Testing Hypothesis 1**

Analyzing the working conditions for women journalists in the News channels of Karachi, the first hypothesis states:

- i.  $H_A$ . Women journalists are assigned soft beats due to their gender.
- ii.  $H_0$ - Women journalists are not assigned soft beats due to their gender.

Table 1				
Does your organization assign you soft beats just because you are a female?				
Frequency				
Yes	No	total	No answer	n
35	34	69	10	79
Does your organization assign you soft beats just because you are a female?				
Chi-Square		.014 <sup>a</sup>		
Df		1		
P value		.904		

Interpretation: This question was answered by the 69 journalists out of the total population of 79, leaving the ten blank responses. Assessing the results with the method of Nonparametric One Sample Chi-Square Test, we opted for a chi square test over here because we have nominal variables, as a result of Chi-Square the discovered value of significance i.e. P value turned out to be 0.904 which is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is retained.

#### Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The categories of 21. Does your organization assign you soft beats just because you are a female? occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.904	Retain the null hypothesis.

The result describes the situation as the Women journalists are not assigned soft beats due to their gender.

## Testing Hypothesis 2

To investigate the working conditions for women journalists in the News channels of Karachi, the second hypothesis states:

- i.  $H_A$ - Women journalists have job security.
- ii.  $H_0$ - Women journalists do not have job security.

Table 2				
Do you have job security?				
frequency				
Yes	No	Total	No answer	n
31	42	73	6	79

Chi-Square Test 2	
Do you have job security?	
Chi-Square	1.658 <sup>a</sup>
Df	1
Asymp. Sig./ P value	.198

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The categories of 52. Do you have job security? occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.198	Retain the null hypothesis.

Interpretation: the results are brought by the 73 respondents out of 79 because the 6 respondent didn't attempt the question. Assessing the results with the method of Nonparametric One Sample Chi-Square Test, we opted for a chi square test over here because we have nominal variables, as a result of Chi-Square the discovered value of significance i.e. P value turned out to be 0.198 which happens to be greater than 0.05. Hence, when the significance or P value is greater than 0.05 it indicates to retain the null hypothesis. Thusly, the women journalists in the News channels of Karachi do not have job security.

### Testing Hypothesis 3

- i.  $H_A$ - women journalists say that their male colleagues are cooperative with them.
- ii.  $H_0$ - women journalists say that their male colleagues are not cooperative with them.

To study the perceived behavior of male colleagues towards their female journalist colleagues in the news channels of Karachi, the researchers attempt to assess the results by the non-parametric chi square test.

Table 3				
Do you think the behavior of your male colleagues with you is cooperative?				
frequency				
Yes	No	Total	No answer	n
66	9	75	4	79

### Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The categories of 23. Do you think the behavior of your male colleagues with you is cooperative? occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Chi-Square Test 3	
Do you think the behavior of your male colleagues with you is cooperative?	
Chi-Square	43.320 <sup>a</sup>
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Interpretation: according to the result, the calculated significance value i.e. P value turns out to be 0.000 which appears  $p < 0.05$ , as too insignificant for the null hypothesis to be viable. Thus, our null hypothesis is rejected establishing the fact that the male colleagues are cooperative with their female journalists.

**Testing Hypothesis 4**

- i.  $H_A$ - Gender discrimination at the workplace adversely affects the performance of women journalists.
- ii.  $H_0$ - Gender discrimination at the workplace does not have adverse effect on the performance of women journalists.

To assess the impingement of the gender discrimination on the performance of women journalists, here we evaluate the results by the non-parametric chi square.

Table 4					
Does Gender Discrimination adversely affect the women employee's performance?					
frequency					
Yes	No	Sometim es	Total	No answer	n
54	16	5	75	4	79

**Hypothesis Test Summary**

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The categories of 29. Does Gender Discrimination adversely affect the women employee's performance? occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Chi-Square Test 4	
Does Gender Discrimination adversely affect the women employee's performance?	
Chi-Square	52.880 <sup>a</sup>
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Interpretation: To assess the impact of the gender discrimination on the performance of women journalists, the result of calculated significance value i.e. P value turns out to be 0.000 representing P less than 0.05. Hence,  $P < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is rejected; therefore, the alternative hypothesis stating 'Gender discrimination at the workplace adversely affects the performance of women journalists' is retained.

### **Discussion**

This study is an attempt to bring forth and unfold the working conditions that women journalists are susceptible to at their workplace. The researchers have determined four hypotheses to probe the contemporary state of four dimensions of working conditions for women journalists.

The first hypothesis 'the Women journalists are assigned soft beats due to their gender' was tested using the method of Nonparametric One Sample Chi-Square Test. After we run the test, the subsequent results revealed:

Chi-square = .014<sup>a</sup>,  $p = .904$ , therefore  $p > 0.05$

The significance value 0.904 making the  $p$  value significant enough to accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis, i.e.

- i.  $H_0$ - Women journalists are not assigned soft beats due to their gender.
- ii.  $H_A$ . Women journalists are assigned soft beats due to their gender.

Hence the test results for the first hypothesis disclosed that women journalists are not marginalized and are not assigned the soft beats only because of their gender. As a result of the hypothesis testing women are not confined to the soft beats but if one has a glance on the table of frequencies one sees that out of 69 respondents 35 has affirmed to the question of being assigned the soft beats due to their gender. On the other hand out of 69 respondents a total of 34 respondents voted for the 'no' answer for the same question. The remaining 10 respondents didn't answer the question.

The second hypothesis predicted 'Women journalists have job security'. To perform the hypothesis testing, we opted for the Nonparametric One Sample Chi-Square Test. The result of hypothesis testing maintained:

Chi- Square = 1.658<sup>a</sup>,  $P = 0.198$ , therefore  $P > 0.05$

The value of significance as 0.198 causes it significant enough to retain the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis, i.e.

- i.  $H_0$ - Women journalists do not have job security.
- ii.  $H_A$ - Women journalists have job security.

The output of the second hypothesis ensues that women journalists in the news channels of Karachi do not have job security and therefore they can be fired at any time without warning. If one checks out the frequencies of the respondents' answers, then can

get to know that out of 73 respondents, 31 answered with 'Yes' and the other 42 said 'no' to the question of job security. The remaining 6 respondents left the question blank.

The third hypothesis states, that the behavior of male colleagues with female journalists is cooperative'. This hypothesis was tested by the non-parametric Chi-Square test. The result of chi-square revealed:

Chi-Square = 43.320<sup>a</sup>,  $p = 0.000$ , therefore  $p < 0.05$

The value of significance i.e.  $P = 0.000$  insignificant enough for the null hypothesis to be viable, accepting the alternate hypothesis i.e.

- i.  $H_0$ - women journalists says that their male colleagues are not cooperative with them.
- ii.  $H_A$ - women journalists says that their male colleagues are cooperative with them.

Hence, the Chi Square test result asserts that women journalists often receive cooperation of their male colleagues.

The fourth hypothesis states, 'Gender discrimination adversely affects the performance of women journalists'. Upon testing the fourth hypothesis using the same Nonparametric Chi square test, the subsequent results revealed:

Chi square = 52.880<sup>a</sup>,  $P = 0.000$ , therefore,  $P < 0.05$

As the  $p < 0.05$  it indicates the test is significant, consequently the null hypothesis is rejected, accepting the alternative hypothesis.

- i.  $H_0$ - Gender discrimination at the workplace does not adversely affect the performance of women journalists.
- ii.  $H_A$ - Gender discrimination at the workplace adversely affects the performance of women journalists.

During the survey the women journalists did not hesitate to share about status of those women who are discriminated remain unsatisfied and frustrated resulting in unsound performance. Hence after accepting the alternative hypothesis, it is concluded that the impediment of gender discrimination adversely affects the performance of gender discrimination.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of preliminary statistical analysis, theoretical framework and ensuing rigorous discussion the researchers have come to the conclusion that women journalists are not confined to the soft beats. By virtue of liberal feminism theory's applicative dynamics, as it fulfills the primary purpose and explains the meaning, nature, and challenges affiliated with the events occurring attributed to the working conditions faced by women journalists, which are often encountered in several aspects of life.

Talking about the working conditions for women in journalism, the theory of liberal feminism here helps us in understanding it that women are equally intellectual and skilled as men and they are not made to be marginalized to the soft beats or encounter discriminative behavior. The results of present study reveals that today, the women journalists are working on the beats other than fashion and health like sports and politics. Half of the majority of the women journalists is given the opportunity to opt for the beat according to their skills. After observing the result regarding the marginalization the other half majority of women journalists are kept marginalized. Results also revealed that women journalists are not secure with their job as the trend of contractual hiring is afoot which leads to the diminishing job security in the profession.

Among the respondents during the survey the reporter of a channel Anum Mashkoo expressed her views that journalists have no job security as we can be fired at the drop of a hat. The study further reveals that the journalists are being hired on the basis of contract nullifying their permanent status at their workplace. One of the survey respondents the reporter Sumera Jajja remarked that nowadays the majority of the journalists irrespective of their gender have zero job security.

The aforementioned statistical analysis lays bare the four dimensions of the specifically analyzed working conditions of the journalists in electronic media in Karachi. The result avers the substantial potential of gender discrimination negatively impacting the performance and devotion of a woman journalist for her job. The respondents opinionated about the gender discrimination that today women journalists fight for themselves against discriminative behavior and do not bear lagging behind despite the fact that gender discrimination casts adverse effect on the women journalists performance. The respondents do not hesitate on taking the beats like politics and crime. Moreover many of the respondents negate the idea of considering a beat as a 'soft beat' and said that every beat is as important as other one.

The situation analysis for the women journalist seems to be adapting, gradually fitting the women in the canvas of journalism. Another promising aspect emerged during the study is positive and cooperative behavior of male colleagues towards the female journalists. During the survey the researchers came across many female journalists who talked reverently about most of their male colleagues certifying their cooperative behavior.

All in all the results with the limited working conditions show a promising picture, but the absence of job security raises a concern for the women journalists as in many cases women are the only bread winners of their family who need full security of their job.

### **Recommendation**

The findings of the research raise the problem of the dearth of job security in the television news channels for the women journalists. In the light of the opinions of women journalists the study recommends that contract based jobs poses low job security and the trend should come to an end providing the women journalists job security to accelerate the job satisfaction, motivation and dedication. This is worth keeping in mind that the study was conducted in Karachi which due to its cosmopolitan social structure provides better opportunities for women journalists to work and excel in challenging field of electronic media today.

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