

The Harassment and the Violence against the Female Journalists of Pakistan

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Abstract: With Begum Zeb-un-Nisa Hamidullah the field of Journalism opened its gate to women. Her first column appeared in newspaper in the year 1948. Since then many women have joined the field of journalism. It has always been considered to be a very prestigious profession. People like Shaista Zaid have paved way for today's young generation. Sadly, though the current situation is not as optimistic as we believe it to be. Women are abused of and on in the field. Men harass them off and on. Women are objectified on the basis of their gender. They are stared at and called names. Men whistle if a woman passes by and even in some recent cases women reporters have been slapped by males while trying to do their duty.

Keywords: Harassment, Violence, Women, Safety

Introduction

Women have a rich history in the field of journalism. It goes as old as the time of world war one where women have placed their lives at stake to bring news from the darkest of the places. Women have faced harassment at different stages of workplace and journalism field has been no different. In fact, women have faced more harassment in this field than in any other.

- **International level Journalism conditions:**

An international organization was found in 2003 by the name of News Safety Institute (INSI). It is designed to particularly train the journalist around the world how to deal different situation while working as a female journalist. They are being trained by a senior female journalist who has been in the field for a while now. (Storm, 2014) The report is based on the respondents which have taken part in the survey. This survey was conducted by US safety for women in media department jointly with the Washington DC department of media. 997 of respondents were women. The pie chart shows the details of the different respondents included from different parts of the world.

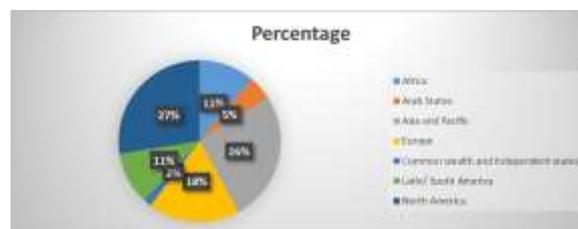


Figure 1: Segregation according to nationality

Out of the 977 participants, 49% women were newspaper journalist while 24% were magazine journalist and 20.6% were television journalists. Almost two thirds of the journalists had been victims of abuse and threats in the line of their job.

- **History of Pakistani Female Journalists:**

In a press conference it was revealed that not much has been done in the regard of female journalists to safeguard their safety up till now. They have faced multiple different problems regarding abuse and obstruction in their line of work. It is but normal for them to be harassed every now and then. (Harcup, 2015) Only a small minority of the media houses have created a committee for protection of women rights. In 1948 Fatima begum launched a magazine *Khatoon* from Lahore. The efforts of the women struggle have resulted for them to change the political and cultural environment of Pakistan. The women who have been missing from media grounds are being questioned all around the world. (Web Desk in Life & Style, 2014). Zeb-un-Nisa being first journalist of Pakistan had struggled to make her place. She started working in 1948. People in that time considered it a taboo for women to acquire education even. They were treated as social out casts. In Pakistan female media members suffer from physical, mental and emotional threats from the environment they operate in.

Victims of the sexual harassment hardly ever get support from the society, other female colleagues or the bosses of the organization. All want to avoid the conspicuous eye on them. Only 2% percent of the honor crime are brought to surface while rest of 98% go unchecked which is sad reality. (Arif, 2016)

Journalism is a field that sub-continent generally was lagging behind especially the Muslims of that era due to Scio-economic conditions as well as the political conditions of the sub-continent in that period. Journalism gained some popularity and progress due to constant efforts of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and people like Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar. Education was not a wide spread element of the society in that time and hence women journalist were not to be found in those early days. The non-Muslims dominated the journalism field in majority. In 1822 first Muslim newspaper appeared with the name of *Jam-e-Jahan Nama*. It lasted for very short time. *Tazeeb-e-Niswan* was the first Muslim magazine that was published in 1899 under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. (Ghulam Shabir, 2009)

- **Cultural and Societal Aspects:**

Religion:

In the religion of Islam, African traditional, Christianity, and Hinduism. women are considered inferior to the man and are expected not to talk in public. The woman's place in the Pakistani society is clearly distinct from that of the man in all spheres of life. Islam as a religion has provided respectable status and chances for women to establish themselves as an essential part of society. The Holy Quran revealed the origin of humanity and had addressed man and women as complementary modules of society who together are able to sustain the survival of human race and book addresses both men and women in a same way. Islam not only provides the basic right to women but also provide females right to buy, sell, manage her money, earn a living and manage her own assists. But some extremist's religion groups are misusing the religion. They are making their own rules and regulation which is far away from the context of Islam. According to them, Women are not allowed for even education. The sole purpose of a female for lifetime is only to stay inside four walls and only do domestic households. They are not allowed for even to think freely. Such groups are brainwashing the society and creating hurdles in the way of females as well as for higher education and profession. Especially, in the field of media women are the threat to kill.

Family Pressure:

The idea of a woman working outside the house, and especially working within the mass media, is still taboo in many parts of the world. Some Pakistani traditional families, particularly men, including fathers, brothers, and husbands, are often not willing to the women of their families working in the media. A job that places a woman in any traditionally public, male-dominated space can be controversial. The job where women's images or voices are broadcast to the general public can evoke intervention by relatives. More than half of the interviewees in this study reported that either some or all of their family members were opposed to their choice to work in the media. Majority of the interviewees reported that their families had a problem with their work in the media and

that they had to struggle for months to obtain their family's consent and reach their goal of working in the media with some certain conditions such as

- Work within specific hours and on official days.
- Return to home before sunset.
- Cannot go out from office without informing the family.
- Stay away from any verbal contact with male colleagues (This condition varies from city to city).

Cultural Taboos:

This phenomenon has not succeeded in erasing the mentality that women are inferior to men physically, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, etc. Women who today find themselves in historically male-dominated professions, like journalism, face enormous challenges. This research aims to identify the main obstacles Pakistani females face in the media world and to propose some solutions. It was observed that though the educational level of both men and women has increased in most areas, conservative mind-set still prevails blocking the way of majority of educated women not to work and earn. It was highlighted that even if a small number of women is allowed to work, the society has pre-defined roles and jobs for them. It was discussed that working women in small cities and rural areas are considered to have immoral character and are thus not given much respect in the society. Social pressure on working women can be gauged from the fact that a majority of religious representatives are against the working of women outside the house. According to a respondent, "It is okay for married women to work, but it is not considered acceptable that unmarried girls should go out and work with men."

There are two important aspects of violence against female journalists force participation. First, women face societal and cultural pressures to work and participate in the labor force. They have prejudiced roles that they can perform and particular sectors that they can work in. Even then, they are labelled and looked down upon by a number of social groups. Second, the workforce itself biases against women by not compensating them in accordance with their work thus creating gender inequity in terms of wages and recompense. Furthermore, workforce harassment is a serious concern and despite having legislative protection, the reality of such incidences is still stark.

- **Present Conditions:**

The present conditions for woman journalist is improving. It has become a career choice for many women for a present time. Female literacy rate is improving with the passage of time. Women's role in the media and industry is commendable. Many women magazine and newspaper are available in a quite substantial number. They have built their market and are actively followed. Women universities and colleges now have separate mass communication departments. (Veeneman, 2016) Female journalists are working as the editors and writers of daily papers. Female journalists are also seen in the electronic media working as news anchors. Number female journalist is increasing in this era. However, there is a dire need for training women regarding how to deal with the problems they face in the line of the work that they do. There are still people and families who refrain from their women to join this line of work for the fear of the conditions that they need to face in order to fully conduct their job. There has been a change in the trend but much potential is sabotaged with the conditions of our environment. It is not one day's work but a risk-free environment should be ensured by the regulatory authorities.

- **The Significance of Female journalists:**

A prestigious organization like International and European Federation (IFJ) has about 12000 employees in their organization which constitutes of 310 female journalists. The estimation shows that 68.98% of journalist population is male while rest are female journalists. This rate is increasing but at a very slow rate as conditions of women working environment are getting better and women education is also becoming at par with men to adopt the profession. The harassment includes behaviors like stereotype male dominant attitude, passing

offensive remarks to female colleagues, objectifying women and any act which pushes women in physical and mental panic at the work place. (Anjum Zia, 2015)

Recently at USA convention past century Journalists were awarded and honored. When the number breakdown analysis is done it showed the ratio of 78 men to 22 women which is like 1 women for every four guys. This number is way too low. For future it is tried that this breakdown is on more even basis then it is at present. Women journalist hold important status in our present day society. (Doll, 2012)

Women have pushed their way through the odds to reach this stage. With more and more women in management positions in newsroom, they are able to change the way things are operated in the place. (Fitzsimmons, 2008) Women put more empathy in what they write and take pictures of. They don't give up easily. The job role that has changed from the past is the major challenge that they face. Men in past just put out good newspaper while women today need to save that. The dilemma is the injustice that prevails in the society. The bright point is the new generation believes strongly in the equality as well as is bringing out the work that touches the heart of the reader. They are determined to keep holding the position and touch souls of their readers in comparison to their male counterparts. As a whole journalism is still on the edge of change as the book by the same title suggests and motivates the newcomers of the field. (Mills, 2009)

Literature Review

In Pakistan generally frontline Journalism is a dangerous zone but it is not only arena where dangers lies especially for women of this society. For a long period Pakistan is considered doubtful for Journalists. Although conditions are far better than the countries like Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan but the incidents are comparable to these countries. Males have suffered brutal violence in the field and even have lost lives in the process.

Women on the other hand have been subjected to violence but it is a matter that is hardly ever highlighted. Women in Pakistani society have no support system or at very minimal level which leaves them to their own fate. (WOMEN JOURNALISTS COMMITMENT AND CHALLENGES, 2015) Women like men not only face violence in their line of work but are also subjected to sexual harassment. The social taboos and segregation restrain them from speaking up about the issue that they face. Any stigma on reputation of the women creates problems for them socially as well as professionally. Women Journalist make up a fraction of the journalist population in the country. Hence they are not given much priority. Women's role across the globe in the media is source of diversity of voices and transparency. (Centre, 2015)

The optimistic part in all this negativity is that women continue to join the field despite the unwelcoming environment. One such incident is shared by a senior reporter became victim to a group of thirty men. At one of the processions held by PTI (Pakistan Tareeq-e-Insaf) during the days of election. The reporter had gone to interview one of the representatives of the party and ended up being prey to these men who tried to grab at every any part of her body. She had been scared if she did not fight them off or if her clothing ripped apart no one would have been able to prevent the inevitable event. (J.watson, 2008) She was the cornered animal. Since then she has been blamed to be attention seeking person and a person who took cheap shot at increasing rating. The journalist further confessed that she chose against launching an FIR to avoid a political drama of the event. She privately when through therapy session and have been afraid to talk about the issue since then. (Rehman, 2013)

To avoid such incidents one must know how to protect themselves. Nobody can grantee safety of anyone at all times. When sent to zones where conflicts are at highest peak, it is necessary to disseminate training to female journalists. These courses include basic training for first aid in case of natural disaster like earthquake as well as regarding situations where massive crowds or riots are to be encountered. (Harris, 2016) These training become very precious in such situations. These training are given internationally but locally it is still a new concept where women are just started being given a little edge over their male counter parts. They are mostly confined to office jobs. Women are still made target on the basis what they wear and how women are subjected to across different cultures. It is best to travel with a trusted person who understands local culture well and can guide one about norms of the culture to avoid any such incidents. (WYATT, 2016)

Democracy prevails when the voices are heard. Sadly, one of these voices is being oppressed and that is the voice of female journalists. These particular females are not only subjected to one on one harassment but they are also threatened online. (ASQUITH, 2016) Around the globe these females and bloggers have been subjected to threats and abuses. They are sent abusive emails with screenshots of article sections attached. They are threatened with rape and murder. Males are also subjected to this kind of threats but the number is nowhere near the cases of women. For the journalists to be able to do their job completely and fairly they need to have ensured safety. The abusive reactions on the freedom of expression online and monitoring the activities of bloggers and explicitly making them a point of joke or abuse are all acts that hinder them to work well as well as make them unstable. (Dunja Mijatović, 2016)

Pakistan is ranked as the fourth most unsafe place for Journalists to operate in. In addition to it Freedom of speech for journalist is also under attack according to act of 2016 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA). Journalists in Pakistan are generally under threat regardless of cast color or creed difference in Pakistan. With the disappearance of Zeenat Shahzadi in August of 2015 this situation got further hype. A surveillance mechanism is in place in Pakistan which has two types. One is done by the government while other is done by public through social media. Some reporters find it interfering in their personal life while others find it very disturbing and threatening. People by acts of these surveillance reach victims and make them point of their gun. People feel violated with the act and suffer physiological trauma due to it. (Zahid, 2016)

Journalism is a very self-esteemed profession due to its unique nature. During the line of work, they face many trying and hard circumstances. Females face many vulgar assaults from the people present at a procession or during the coverage of mass gathering. If they resist or fight back the retaliation is in the worst of forms. Women are tried to trapped and bounded for centuries. Every profession has its bad and good sides and the society as a whole need to be educated and learn to accept that women can become part of such a bold field. People need to stop tagging them with bad symbols or wrong names just because they are attached to media. (Jabeen, 2015)

A renowned Journalist at a prize ceremony admits that it is a shame that when she joined their profession there was much discrimination against women and very few opportunities available to avail. She made her way through facing the hardest of all strings attached. Sadly there is a downfall of paper industry has started prevailing as people have moved to electronic media and have stopped reaching out for written material. Women are making a difference producing material that is comprehensive and appeal to general audience. (Kasich, 2011)

Journalism is a field that needs special direction of mind. The first requirement of this profession is to have an interest in the daily news and update. Journalism is a profession that requires for one to be very responsible and be faithful in providing right and truthful information. (evirtualguru_ajaygour, 2015) Journalism is being abused by the society when the workers are harassed. Society would lose capable reporters and journalist which bring us the latest and truest of the news. A world renowned comic series Super Man's character Lois Lane has been very popular among women. She has character which is a hard hitting reporter. She has been a source of inspiration for many women to join the field. They wish to meet the hard challenge of being the best and tuff nut reporter. (Stevens, 2016)

Journalism is a very rapidly changing industry but it is also facing the issue of the gender equality. It is agreed upon that female bring something new to journalism always. It is very important that journalists support each other. They need to collaborate together to bring better things and work. One man show do not last long and at one point one needs backup. As explained above report that female face very harsh circumstances during their line of work. Hence, it is imperative that male counterpart need to project them and help them to be as productive as them. (Ciobanu, 2016)At times men cannot divulge information from war zone areas. In comparison women prove to be very successful at times. They are not very much interested in the weapons that are in use in war but they bring in the very important information by interacting with other women on the scene. Women feel comfortable and welcome them. In fact it came to attention that these women were treated very humbly and with respect. (Whitehorn, 2014)

Problem Statement

“The Harassment and Violence against the Female Journalists in Pakistan.”

Objectives

The objective of the research is listed below:

- To find out the type of harassment and violence are faced by female journalist.
- To find out the Knowledge about female protection laws among female journalists.
- To find out the reputation of females in society as working in journalism field.
- To find out physical and psychological violence within journalism field.
- To find out that in which positions mostly female journalists are hired in Electronic media.
- To explore and assess the challenges that female journalist confronted at their workplace
- To develop an understanding about the awareness and information level of female journalists of Pakistan and about their rights and their contribution in raising female journalist voice against the workplace harassment.

Research Questions

Some of the questions that would be answered by this research would be:

- Does your Organization provide you with Safety Training?
- Do you face violence and harassment in the field of journalism?
- Do you harass by your male colleagues?
- Do you face discrimination as female journalist?
- Do you have knowledge about Pakistan Penal Code section 509?

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis is:

“Harassment and violence can be reduced by providing training to Journalists and creating awareness in society.”

Methodology

There were about 200 questionnaires distributed between the different major cities of Pakistan and media members to gain the information. The questionnaires were divided among women reporters to get views of female Journalists. However, 30 questionnaires were disregarded as they were not filled correctly. The time period was required for data collection approximately 3 months. The questionnaires were equally distributed to print and electronic media women journalists.

The media that was contacted included all:

- Newspapers & Magazine
- Radio
- Online Bloggers
- Television

Twenty questionnaires per channel of print and electronic media organization were distributed to working females. The results were then analyzed using SPSS and the related graphs have been attached with the report. Questionnaire is a part of the report's Appendix.

Results

Q1. What is the average age of female journalists' selection in Pakistan?

Interpretation

The results show that maximum of our respondents lie in the age group of 19-24. It means more and more young professionals are entering the field. Group 2 with 25-30 age is with 25%. The other two groups are almost with the same ratio.

Table 1

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	19-24	49	59.8	61.3	61.3
	25-30	20	24.4	25.0	86.3
	31-36	6	7.3	7.5	93.8
	37-42	5	6.1	6.3	100.0
	Total	80	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.4		
Total		82	100.0		

Q2.

What is the qualification level of most female journalists?

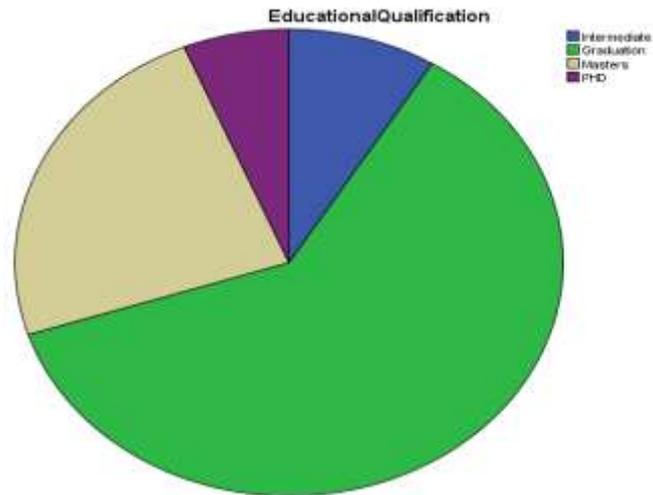


Figure 2

Table 2

		Educational Qualification			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Intermediate	7	8.5	8.8	8.8
	Graduation	49	59.8	61.3	70.0
	Masters	19	23.2	23.8	93.8
	PHD	5	6.1	6.3	100.0
	Total	80	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.4		
	Total	82	100.0		

Interpretation:

The chart clearly signify that maximum of the employees are graduates. This mean trained professionals are joining with good backgrounds.

Q3. Do you receive an equal remuneration /salary as compared to your male colleagues?

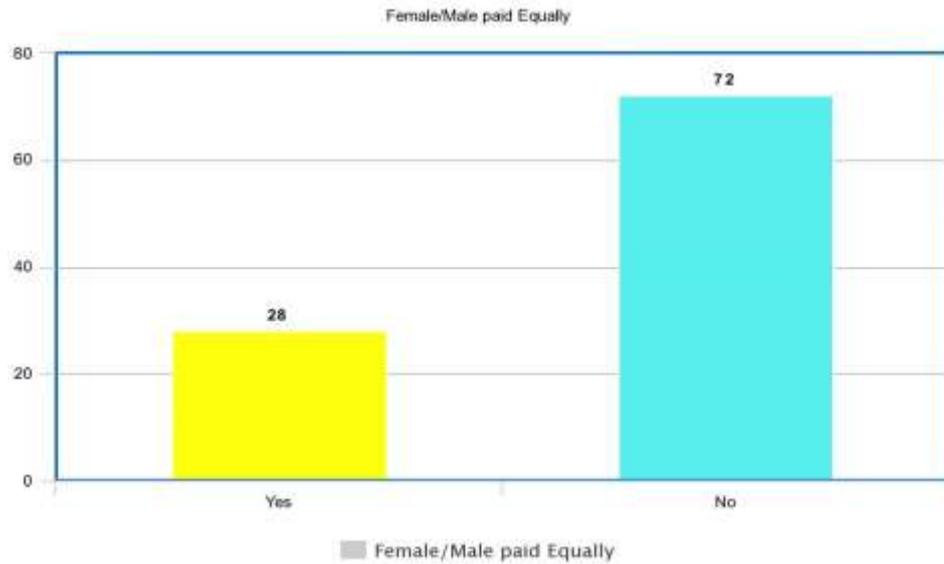


Figure 1

Interpretation:

The chart clearly signify that maximum of female employees are not paid equally to male colleagues with 78%. Only 28% of female are paid equal to their male colleagues.

Q4. Do you get over

time pay?

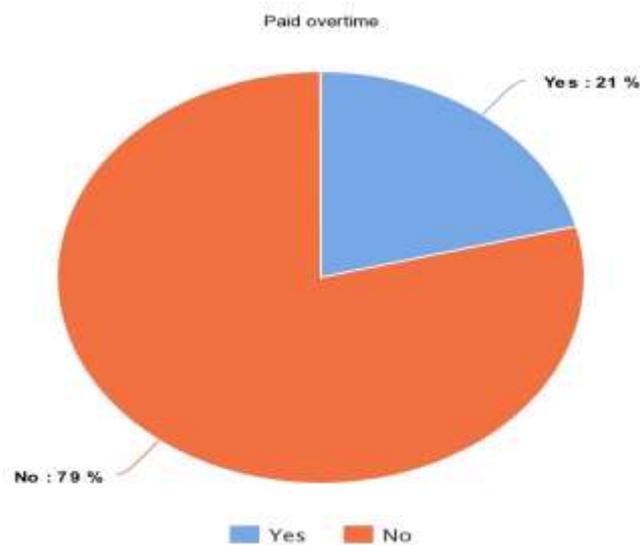


Figure 2

Interpretation:

The result illustrates that major section of female working in media environment not paid overtime. The media owners are taking working from them and not paying according to their extra-work.

Q5. Does your Organization provide you with Safety Training?



Figure 3

Interpretation:

The result demonstrates that media organizations are not working toward safety training for women journalists. The result shows that only 22% of respondents answered with yes. The 78% of female are deprived from safety training programs.

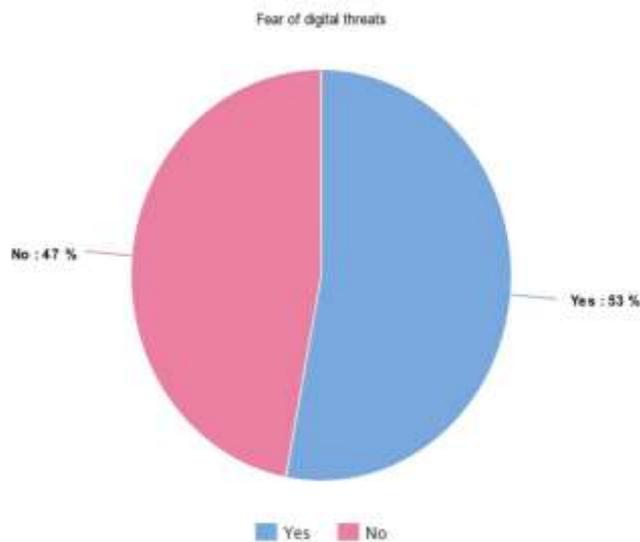


Figure 4

Q6. Do you face digital fear?

Interpretation:

It is crystal clear through findings that more than 50% women in journalism have fear of digital threats. And 47% of women participant answered with No.

Q7. Have you experienced intimidation threats or abuse in relation to your work?

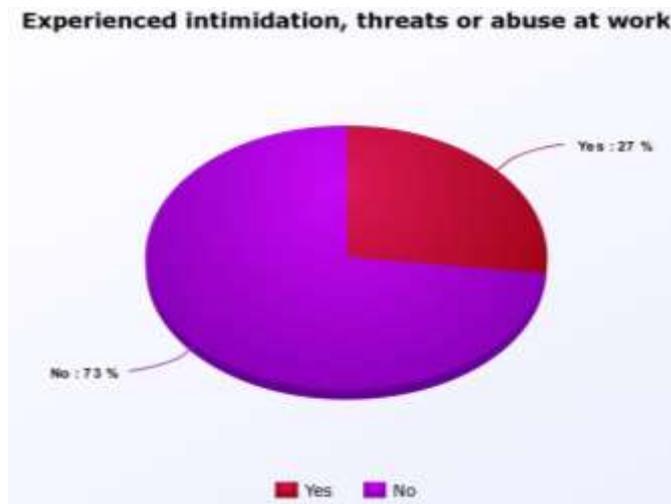


Figure 5

Interpretation:

The results shows that majority of female participants answer with no. Some of women in media organization are the victim of harassment and violence.

Q8. Specify the types of threats you have faced?

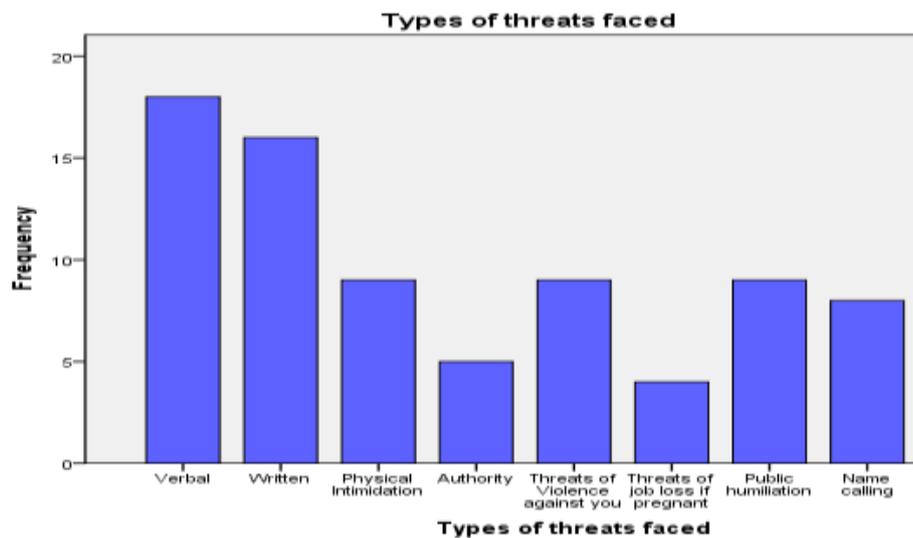
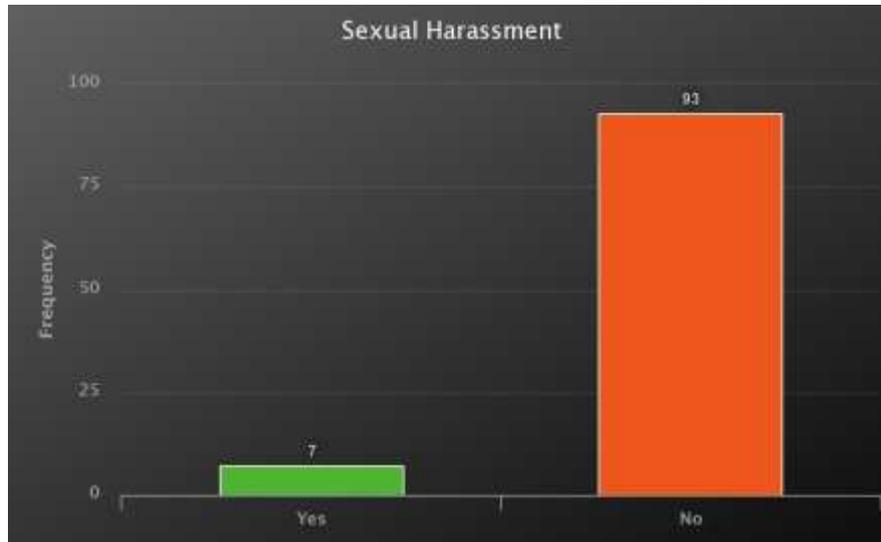


Figure 6

Interpretation:

The type of threat is faced by women in media organization is the Verbal with high ratio. The second level includes the type of written. The third type includes the physical intimidation such as inappropriate touching female within workplace and also outside. Female journalists are not safe even from authority. The type of name calling and public humiliation faced by most of female journalists in Pakistan.

Q9. Did you face sexual harassment at work?



Interpretation:

The victims of sexual harassment case are on 7%. The other respondents answered with no.

Q10. Did you report sexual Harassment?

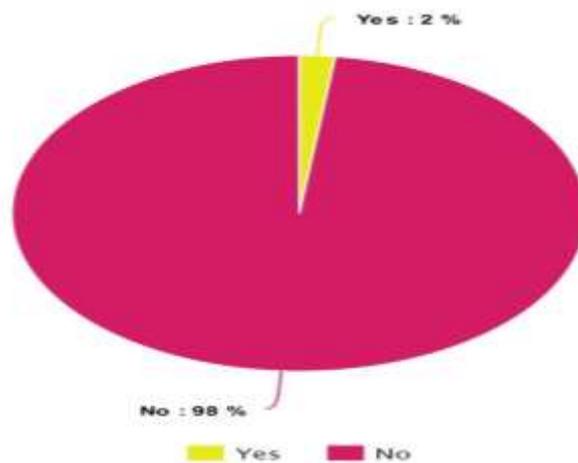


Figure 7

Interpretation:

The result shows that only 2% of victims reported against sexual harassment.

Conclusion

The survey shows that there has been a large improvement in the thinking and mindset of the people. People have started encouraging female to bring the difference to the society and contribute to the productivity of this country. However, they are still stopped from the positions where they can make a decision or raise voices. It is still disturbing that people wish to dominate them in positions where they can have a strong role. Their voices are crushed. Media is one of such major fields. It is clear that female media workers face substantial obstacles in their work, both gender-related. Social and cultural restrictions limit female mobility and increase women's vulnerability in the workplace. Women must strive to overcome extensive barriers to pursuing media work, including the family opposition, social pressures, and strong stigmas and taboos. Despite a shortage of female workers, women often face a lot difficulty for securing their job in the media organization.

Upon entering the workforce, women continue to face substantial problems, including pay discrimination, harassment, violence, threats and psychological effects of their work. The data analyzed in this research showed low rates of sexual harassment, intimidation and violence at the workplace and majority of female do not talk about this issue. Cultural stigmas and taboos lead to low levels of reporting of harassment, and it is possible that the rate of harassment incidents is higher than the reported figures. Sexual issues and sex-related matters are taboo in Pakistan, and many are unwilling to openly discuss incidents or report instances of abuse.

Apart from sexual harassment, women also suffer from other forms of gender discrimination at workplace. Common beliefs and cultural restrictions in the society have led to a lower public perception in the capability and potential of women to perform their work as well as their male counterparts. The patriarchal culture prevailing in the Pakistani society has created barriers to women's success. As reported by participants in this research, women tend to receive lower pay, benefits and job security than their male counterparts in the workplace. In addition to the risks that all media workers face in the unpredictable, conflict environment of Pakistan, female journalists are often intimidated and threatened because of their profession and gender. Relatives, acquaintances and extremist religious groups that are opposed to women working outside the house are the most commonly responsible parties for these threats and intimidation.

Against these overwhelming odds, hundreds of female journalists continue their work in Pakistan, with hundreds more studying journalism in various universities across the country, training to become the future of journalism in Pakistan. To that end, it is not out of place to call female journalists heroes of Pakistan; heroes fighting for freedom of expression, speech, livelihood and the future of female media workers in the country.

Recommendations

It is generally considered that comfortable working environment is required for best creative work and at majority workplaces women harassment issues take place but less attention has paid toward the severity of the problem. However, the research has suggested some recommendations for government, media organizations and for general public. For the government, female journalist's harassment issues at workplaces and out of workplace including a step forward to strictly implement the protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010 and immediately promulgate a code of conduct in all public and private sector. However, if any harassment case appears then the government should take notice and should go for the formation of committees to inspect the whole situation in spite of ignoring it. This study has also indicated some recommendations for media organizations to bring positive change to their workplace. They should make efforts for changing stereotypical thinking patterns about working women journalists and should create awareness through organizing workshops for gender sensitization. Moreover, all the stakeholders should make efforts to raise the economic, social and educational status of society which is core cause of women harassment in Pakistan. More opportunities should be given to females to fully exercise their capabilities and explore their potential within the media organization. The directors of media organizations should facilitate a work environment where female journalists feel safe and empowered to share their problems and complaints with those in charge.

A positive change is most evident but we cannot just stop here. We need to train our mothers to treat male and female child alike. Training starts at home. The difference that we do at home in showering our all attention to a male child because he will be source of earning, later on, is a wrong thinking. Both are equally important and to

be loved. Women have right to be educated and more importantly treated with respect. Mothers are the first thing that a child learns to follow and we need to train them to be fair. As napoleon says “Give me good mothers and I will give you strong nation.”

Secondly, the Journalists need to be trained to handle the situation such as they face in the line of their work. It is very necessary that they know how to react and safeguard themselves. Nobody can grantee their safety at all times except themselves. As international journalists are being trained our local journalist should get similar training and government should provide the necessary infrastructure to carry it out. Despite existing laws, most of the women don't know how to defend themselves on a legislative level in case of harassment. Hence, awareness about the laws protecting female rights should be raised in educational institutions preparing future journalists and other media professionals, as well as in society in general.

Sexual harassment, being a taboo topic in Pakistani society, makes women silence the problem and cope with it on their own. It is suggested to create online help resource for victims affected by harassment or violence, where they can get the legal consultation about their problem as well as the help of professional psychologists, being it openly or anonymously.

SILENCE IS VIOLENCE End the Abuse of Women in Pakistan!

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