

Female TV Journalists Defying Gendered Newsroom Culture? A Qualitative Study of Pakistani Media

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Abstract

This article delves into the experiences of Pakistani female TV journalists, examining their status in newsrooms and the field through the lenses of the glass ceiling concept and gender theory in journalism. The study investigates the challenges they face, including discrimination and harassment within a gendered newsroom culture, as well as the obstacles they encounter in reaching top leadership positions. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study conducted in-depth interviews with 12 journalists from different Pakistani channels, comprising 8 female journalists and 4 male journalists. The interviews ensured representation from both genders in TV newsrooms. The study's findings revolve around key themes such as gender bias, the prevalence of a masculine culture, harassment, the use of the "women card," the impact of age and appearance, the lack of female representation in decision-making positions, and the existence of unnoticed barriers. The research highlights that Pakistani female TV journalists are a minority, and while some attempt to challenge stereotypes in their field and workplace, there remain significant hurdles for women journalists to reach top-tier positions. Based on the study's outcomes, it recommends media organizations to review their existing policies or devise new ones in response to the research findings. Such measures aim to foster a more equitable and inclusive environment for female journalists, enabling them to break barriers and achieve greater representation in leadership roles.

Keywords: *Women Journalists, Journalism, TV Journalists, Gender, Newsroom Culture, Glass Ceiling, Gender Bias, Harassment.*

Introduction

News media is considered as the fourth estate. Pakistani news channels industry has grown rapidly in 2002, when new private channels were launched. Even Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was also established in the same year. Workforce from the print media (mostly male journalists) switched to electronic media and fresh female graduates from the Universities also start joining newly flourished news channels. As news channels provide a visual medium, so most of the women get employment opportunities along with male journalists. Now the career span of most of the female TV journalists revolves around this era. Being comparatively new media industry, Pakistani news channels are still in a process of evolution, and female TV journalists are working as actors within the structures and trying to fight with all gender based stereotyping in the newsroom culture, inherited from the newspapers. Mostly women journalists around the globe have stated that they have to face discrimination in the newsroom. Some women also mention unseen

and unnoticed sexual or psychological harassment at workplace just because of a male governing culture (Ross, 2001).

This study explores the status of female TV journalists in gendered newsroom culture of Pakistani news channels, and categorizes the crucial factors that needs to be addressed, and further identifies the barriers. This research suggests the news channels to create awareness regarding workplace harassment and gender bias; it further gives recommendations to develop a healthy strategy for improvising newsroom environment for women journalists in Pakistani channels.

Literature Review

Media has a vital role in providing information. Pakistani electronic news media industry is now around seventeen years old, but it is still in the rearing process. Through reviewing literature, it has been learnt that women journalists are facing typical stereotyped barriers everywhere in the world. Whether they are working in the newsroom or reporting in the field, women are minority in media; and when it comes to a bigger scenario like decision maker role or other major positions they are almost limited (Khan, 2005). Then there is a common barrier in female journalist's progression, that is harassment at workplace and it can be aggressive, nonviolent, casual, psychological, sexual or physical. Sometimes small violent moves turn out to be a cause of sexual harassment and other annoying & suppressing acts (Malamuth & Briere, 1986).

Age and face value or overall appearance have always been considered requisite for female TV journalists, especially anchors. Female newscasters or talk show hosts have to look fresh, good and young to meet the expectations of audience and management as well. To be young and look attractive is still kind of a demand. Women are appreciated more for their appearances than their capabilities (Ferri, 1986). Even female anchors are appointed for their charm, not for their skills mostly (Barnes, 2005).

Then there are stereotypical biases for women journalists. Male journalists have particular prejudices and presumptions for the women colleagues that is another reason for the discrimination in newsroom. Some of those predispositions are, women are less interested in their career, they are more inclined towards their families; and females are not meant for doing every task and field work, so if they are willing to do, then they should do it like a man without any sensitivity and shyness, otherwise they should only be doing soft stories (Abraham, 1988).

Women journalists have to compromise a lot to claim their space in a male-dominated Pakistani media industry. Even when female journalists are blooming in their profession, they still get aggravation at workplaces and they choose not to report these issues. The environment is so toxic that despite of having all relevant skills and potential to shine in the industry, they seldom find an opportunity to

reach high-level positions in their media houses (Hafeez & Zahid, 2020). Women are also stereotyped with certain gender roles as they are asked not to cover certain assignments, which are usually attributed as man's job. They are frequently told that they are not capable enough to perform those tasks (Hussain, 2019).

Female journalists don't come forward as they cannot take extra load of over timing at work due to their family and other social compulsions, and then the newsroom culture is not always supportive towards women. So the women journalists are considered not to be suitable for managerial and decision making posts and significant beats are not assigned to them (Sultana, 2005). Women are the media channels in good number, still they are not enough. The women in media have to face gender-based discernment and also have trouble maintaining the work and family balance. Their domestic responsibilities may sometimes obstruct their ability to take on challenging tasks. They are not always supported by their families, so their career path is also very controlled sometimes. And the coworkers also use this excuse to hold back the progression of their female colleagues (Jamil, 2020).

After reviewing literature, certain themes are derived for the present study, and are expanded further through the findings of this research. Those themes are male dominance in newsroom, gender discrimination, harassment, age and appearance and progression.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theoretical framework made by combining two concepts; the theory of gender and glass ceiling effect & sticky floors concept (Morgan, 2015). The 'Glass' is referred to transparent, while 'Ceiling' means the barriers or obstacles, together glass ceiling can be defined as the invisible barriers that stop women progression to the upper hierarchical key positions. Glass ceiling involves gender stereotypes, pessimistic behaviors towards women, and chilly climate (Currie & Thiele, 2001).

The term 'glass ceiling' was first used by Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt in a Wall Street Journal article on March 24, 1986, as invisible barriers faced by women to reach corporate key positions. Later it was also used in an academic article published in 1987 by A.

M. Morrison and others entitled: "Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of America's Largest Corporations?" The study revealed that contradiction in expectations from women workers are major factors of the glass ceiling and this is applied to women as group not just individuals (Morrison et al, 1987). Then US Department of Labor (1991) declared 'Glass Ceiling Initiative Report' that revealed discriminating employment for women staff, inadequate evaluation and ignoring the Equal Employment Opportunity responsibilities by the administrators decision-makers (Jarmon, 2014).

Gender equity and progression will also be studied using the lenses of the sticky floor effect that says women experience great difficulty in entering management positions. That is why there remain very less women in higher level management. Female staff members experience great difficulty in entering management positions and remain stuck in sticky floors in the male dominating fields like business, law, media and sports (Reichman & Sterling 2004). Gender theories are constructed by the feminists to develop categories after studying female experience in the society (Robinson, 2005). Theory of gender in relation with journalism is used to identify the experience of female TV journalists in gendered newsroom culture.

Research Questions

R1: What are the challenges faced by Pakistani female TV journalists and how are they confronting gendered newsroom culture?

R2: Whether women journalists working in Pakistani TV channels are breaking stereotypes and glass ceiling or not?

Methodology

An inductive approach is the most suitable perspective for this study, using qualitative methods of research. In-depth interviews of 12 Pakistani TV journalists, including 8 females and 4 males, are conducted. The sample is selected with the ratio of 2 females and one male journalist from mainstream TV channels working in different cities of Pakistan. Most of the in-depth interviews are conducted in a face to face sitting but some of the journalists were approached through call and Whatsapp, because of their unavailability in the same city, so the in-depth interviews were conducted through telephonic and social media connection. All respondents are working on different positions in the newsrooms of different channels.

The participants of this study are selected through the snowball sampling; one interviewee was leading to the next respondent. This method is selected because the research is focusing on a delicate matter so the viewpoints of the inside workers of the newsroom mainly journalists are necessary to conduct a thorough study (Glaser, 1978). All the respondents are working on different positions in the newsrooms of Pakistani channels. Identities of the respondents will not be disclosed during the analysis due to the sensitivity of the issue. The excerpts from their interviews will be discussed anonymously.

Findings and Discussions

By analyzing in-depth interviews of the TV journalists, certain themes are identified from the questions regarding the gendered newsroom culture. Findings will be categorized under those themes.

Dominance: Majority is authority

In electronic media, male journalists are in obvious majority in the newsrooms. All of the respondents have identified the less number of female TV journalists as one of the reasons of male dominance in the field and governing masculine norms in the newsroom culture. As a female respondent suggests two reasons for male dominance in the newsrooms, "First of all, working in media is still a taboo for girls in our society. As one of my Aunts once told me, 'You are in media now you won't be able to get married, because media women are very shrewd.' So the people find it a bold field which can allegedly spoil the girl. Secondly, media field is male dominant just the way our society is. There is a misconception that females cannot handle a difficult task therefore they prefer hiring males instead of women and filling a certain percentage is just an obligation for them therefore we see girls in TV journalism." She further shares her experience of her early days in the newsroom, "I remember when I started my career in journalism as an internee, my first boss told me, 'You can do internship but I will not hire you. This job isn't good for girls. You better get a job at some school and become a teacher.' Now when he sees me covering all sort of hardcore news stories, he tells others that he was my colleague once. It feels good."

Another female respondent confirms that women journalists are in minority, "Females in newsroom are not more than 7% of the total count of the employees in head offices and in bureaus, they are just 2%. If there had to be 20 reporters working in a bureau of a TV channel, then there would have been two female reporters. We have four at Samaa TV, but they are not designated on senior posts and have not been assigned with serious tasks."

Findings reveal that 67% respondents confirm the dominance of masculine norms or maleness in the newsroom. 33% respondents say that there is a neutral environment in their newsroom and masculine culture is not dominant. A male respondent, with the experience working in the newsrooms of both print and electronic media, tells the reasons of the prevalent masculine norms, "Newsroom has lesser number of women, because most of the people who joined TV channels are from newspapers, where women avoid working in newsrooms because of the odd timings. So the work force shifted from newspapers to the TV channels' newsroom mostly comprises of male journalists. They are in majority and they inherit the same culture like late night sittings on a cup of tea, smoking in newsroom, and even the use of obnoxious jargons too. But the things are changing now as fresh journalists from the universities, are joining newsrooms. So now if the women are working at their work station in the newsroom, there will be less use of abusive language, and when they will leave male journalists will start using slangs

again in their free style.” He confirms that environment of a TV newsroom is comparatively better than that of a newspapers.

A female respondent also confirms the dominating masculine culture, “I have worked in Samaa TV, Bol TV, ARY News, City 42, and 92 News, and I feel that males are very dominant because they are more in number, so they set the values in the newsroom. In most of the newsrooms, abusive slangs are used so badly that sometimes it becomes difficult for a female journalist to sit there and male colleagues don’t even bother about the fact if she might be getting irritated by their smoking habits and embarrassed by their terrible choice of words.”

Two female journalists from different TV channels mention the effort of their organizations to moderate the dominant masculine norms in the newsrooms, as one respondent says, “In my newsroom, smoking is not allowed and whoever smoke in office area, is fined.”

Gender Bias

Dominant male gender is more powerful that can be a reason of discrimination towards female journalists in the newsrooms, while assigning tasks labeling them with specific gender roles. This study reveals that 83% respondents confirm there is discrimination towards female TV journalists in the newsrooms of Pakistani TV channels, whereas 17% respondents say that women are treated equally while assigning tasks. A female participant of the study says despite of constant hard work, women journalists face discrimination, “Most of the women in journalism have proved themselves but still they are not treated equally as their male colleagues. Female reporters are usually assigned to work on lighter stories like health related issues, education and culture. So there is a defined coverage area and skills set for them mostly by their male colleagues. Male journalists are always empowered; especially crime reporters always get edge and attention of high ups.”

Another female respondent adds, “Female journalists are discriminated in reporting department where the male reporters usually get the important beats like politics, sports and crime, and lady reporters are mostly limited to general beats.” Whereas a male respondent disagrees that the women journalists can work equally in every beat with men, “In routine news, both can work at equal pace but when it comes to exclusive stories, apart from just one or two exceptions, we don’t have women journalists who work equally best as men. Female journalists are normally allowed to work on social issues, music concerts, exhibition, and men are assigned to work in rough and tough areas as well.”

A female respondent tells how hard it is to advance in a newsroom with all the gender bias women have to face, “It is very hard to get yourself acknowledged as a female journalist. When I joined media, I was initially assigned with all kind of soft stories every day from covering flower exhibitions to Sunday Markets. But one has to fight really hard to get recognition as a journalist who is no less than men.” Another woman journalist reveals that sometimes women are discriminated with the designation allotment as well, “I joined as package producer, now I am

working as a replacement of input manager as well. I am doing extra job, on a bigger position than that I actually have. I am performing the duties of input manager, but have the designation of a correspondent."

Most of the respondents agree that men and women should be given equal opportunities to cover hard news. A male journalist adds, "Women can work equally with men in journalism. Mostly media houses treat women as soft and chicken hearted in nature. They don't assign hard jobs to their female colleagues. But I have noticed whenever female journalists get a chance in office work or in field, they perform well."

News desk attitude is not always encouraging towards the women journalists, says a female respondent, "They are not ready to assign some extraordinary roles. They don't encourage female reporters. Somehow women are also responsible for it as they are not always willing to take any uphill task. Then the attitude of news room managers also makes them realize at the very beginning that what they are supposed to do or what not to do." Findings reveal that there is an undeniable bias in the newsroom towards female journalists somehow women are also contributing to this discrimination by carrying on with these biases. These attitudes are changing but with a very low pace.

Newsroom or Field Harassment

According to The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), harassment is undesirable verbal or physical behavior based on race, sex, color, gender, nationality, religion, age and disability. Workplace harassment is such an unpleasant conduct that an employee feels like a victim. This study reveals that 83% respondents confirm harassment faced by women journalists in newsroom and field as well, 8% respondents say harassment is there but it also depends on the attitude of female journalists. 42% respondents say that harassment cases are not reported whereas 33% participants say that harassment cases are reported and prompt action is taken. 16% respondents say that cases are reported, but remain unnoticed. 50% respondents confirm that their organizations have a written code of conduct to address harassment cases, whereas 50% respondents say that there is no written code of conduct in their TV channels in Pakistan.

A female respondent confirms that women face different levels of harassment not only in newsroom but also in the field, "Women have to struggle very hard to draw the line between source and journalist relation because at times sources try to take them for granted considering them a female. At work places, it is not always physical or sexual harassment, most of the times it is psychological abuse. Especially if a woman is married and has kids, she will be told again and again that she is not concentrating on work rather thinking of her domestic issues. Such comments shatter journalist mentally and emotionally. I consider that a serious type of harassment." Another female respondent says, "Harassment can be some sort of comment or gossip between two colleagues about one's weight and physique. We even have to settle our shawl or scarf many times when we are at

work place or in the field. Some of the male colleagues want the leverage to get frank with the female journalists, ignoring their comfort zone." A female participant identifies that some news anchors get exploited by unfair shifts, she says, "Some channels have very good atmosphere. But at some places, anchors are exploited in order to excel or to shift from morning to Prime-time. I joined Express News, worked really hard and I was expecting that I would be shifted from night to the morning. But I got to know that because I didn't have good relations with the relevant authorities. I was so disheartened that I switched the channel and moved to Karachi. I suffered from the low self-esteem disorder."

Findings reveal that every harassment case is not reported due to shyness and fear of losing jobs, but some harassment cases are reported and prompt actions are also taken. A male respondent shares, "Some harassment cases were reported, where station head was involved in some anchor, and then a bureau chief was having an affair with a female reporter, in both cases both were fired. There may be more examples." One female respondent uses the harsh word of 'casting couch criteria' for hiring of the news casters and female reporters at some channels, "It is pretty common at some channels, but these cases are not reported because they usually go against victims themselves." Another male respondent identifies that there is no written code of conduct in his media house, but environment is safe, "There is an unwritten code, but we have a very protective environment, but if a case is reported, prompt action is taken and there is an example where a reporter was fired after a trainee reported against him."

Playing Women Card

In response to the question whether women use their sex appeal or play the woman card using wrong allegations to get certain privileges, 91% respondents say that there are a few female journalists who use woman card for their benefits. A female respondent says, "Women especially news program anchors, many of them have no idea of what journalism is, without having news sense they are on screen reading what is on the prompter and reach to the top anchor position just because of favors of many senior anchors and producers and even channel owners. A female journalist, who has been struggling for years, cannot reach at that position where they have reached in months. Now it's not even hidden; it's obvious." Another female respondent says, "Even, if I will face criticism for identifying this issue, but we can't deny the fact. Everyone knows about them and now a days it has become very evident. In fact now they are openly admitting this." A male respondent adds, "Being woman itself is an advantage sometimes, so not all, but a few female journalists use their good looks and charms to get some benefits." Another male respondent say, "Some women use harassment story as a tool as well. There is an example when a female TV journalist reported about the harassing messages from her colleague. That male journalist was fired without any proper investigation. I know a few female journalists who are not very competent but they use woman card to make progress, and because of them, other hardworking females are demoralized."

Age and appearance

TV is a visual medium, so in response to the question that how much age and appearance matters for the female TV journalists and is the criteria different for men, 83% respondents say that age and appearance matter for women journalists only. Whereas 16% participants confirm that age and appearance count for both male and female journalists. Young age and good appearance mostly counts for the women journalists only, says a female respondent, "With the passage of time in the newsroom, female journalists are getting aged whereas men are becoming the senior journalists."

"Slightly older men have more acceptance in the newsroom than the women of the same age," says another female participant. A male respondent suggests that women journalists should retire a little early because of their family life. He adds that female journalists are hired on age and appearance criteria, "As TV is a visual media so pleasing personality matters especially for women and even for men as well. They should be appealing. With the age, they have to leave big channel's screen and shift to a small media house. Broadcasters appear as a face so they lose their worth with the age."

Another female respondent says that news anchors are sometimes treated as model than a journalist, "Journalists often keep on saying that girls have a very short career in news anchoring as channels want new faces. It instigates insecurity in female anchors. Female TV journalists are directly or indirectly told that if they gain weight with growing age or after marriage, they will be replaced with a new face. Women TV journalists are treated as actors and models. And it seems that things are not going to change. But there are a few exceptions in media houses where women are even working after marriage and growing age."

"If a woman is not good as a journalist, but good in her appearance, she will probably survive in the newsroom and the field as well. One of my ex female colleague who was not very good looking, so when she was fired everybody said that she didn't deserve to be here in reporting," says a female journalist. Another female interviewee adds, "One day I was working on assignment desk, I received a call from Central assignment about a news reporter. He said that the lady reporter seemed to be dressed in her mother's clothes. He further added 'if she can't work well at least ask her to appear good on TV, she is hired because of her looks.' So your work counts, but your looks matters too."

Stuck in the Sticky Floors

There has always been a question that whether the female journalists are breaking glass ceiling or are stuck in the sticky floors. Are they growing up to the decision making positions, or top notch slots or still stuck in the middle of their career and ending up there? Findings reveal that 91% respondents confirm that female TV journalists are still stuck in the sticky floors and are unable to reach the senior level posts. One of the female respondents says women journalists are not

considered for the key positions in Pakistani TV channels, “Women work more but are appreciated less. While working as a producer in a well-recognized channel, I went to all limits to work hard, produced countless outclass reports, and worked day and night. I was verbally appreciated, even had earned standing ovations several times but when it was time for employees’ up-gradation, I was not considered.”

Women journalists are labeled for specific gender roles, so they stop aspiring for the bigger decision making positions. Men have a predisposition that only they can handle upper hierarchical positions well, a female respondent says, “It is self-generated perception of a male dominant newsroom that women are not good at news sense. It is assumed that women do not have the caliber to handle the news and current affairs, that’s why they have a long way to reach key positions.” Another female respondent says that, “I used to joke that one day I will become Director News than I will fix all the problems in news management. I think that it is just a dream that is far from manifestation. There are a few exceptions of the women on key positions at Samaa TV and Aaj TV. But women in authoritative position have to be macho.” A male respondent says, “Women TV journalists are not progressing equally as the male journalists. Being a Bureau Chief or Director News is a 24 hours responsibility. So women would have to prove themselves for this. But yes, they are not given opportunities.”

Unnoticed Barriers

All respondents highlight some unseen hurdles faced by female TV journalist. 50% respondents say that women TV journalists are also discriminated by giving low wages than that of men in Pakistan. According to 42% respondents, both female and male TV journalists are treated equally in income and promotions. Discouraging attitude towards the women journalists, who are mothers also, is another hurdle. A female respondent says, “Women journalists with kids should be encouraged. Most of our media organizations don’t have day care centers; females cannot bring their little ones along with them. I wish all females either married or unmarried could raise voice for this. I had to stay away from field for three years and worked from home only because I never wanted to leave my child alone since I had no elder person to look after him.” Another female respondent adds, “There is no separate prayer room or relaxing area for them, even in some offices there are no separate rest rooms, that’s really weird.”

Maternity leaves are not sufficient and asking for a relaxation in uneasy menstrual cycle is already a stigma in our culture. A female respondent says, “Enough maternity leaves are not granted in every organization. Speaking about your menstrual pain is kind of a taboo; we can’t tell our male bosses that we are having trouble in our special days which can turn into very hard days sometimes. So relief is not possible.” Another female adds, “Maternity leaves in media are not enough. One of our news anchors, Asma Iqbal was called to join the duty after a month of her delivery. I think that it should purely be the choice of a woman to join

back, only if she has completely recovered and the news channel should not pressurize a female journalist who has just become a mother.”

Odd timings and long duty hours are also the hurdles women journalists have to face in electronic media especially. A male respondent says, “Female journalists have timing issues. They are not able to work late at night, they prefer morning shifts and that is better for them.”

Malicious envy is another barrier that normally is ignored, but it exists. A female respondent says, “Sometimes there is an element of jealousy among the female journalists as well, if a female journalist is working hard and getting promotion, she faces leg pulling and sometimes her reputation is maligned not only by male colleagues but also by the female coworkers as well.” A male respondent adds, “Women journalists will find most of their enemies in women colleagues than men.”

Women journalists are supposed to be macho mentally (not physically) if they want to work equally with men. A female respondent supports this argument, “There are some basic requirements of working women but most of the men in the management and higher posts believe that a woman journalist should leave her job and stay at home if she can't act like a man or have domestic issues. This is very discouraging.”

Breaking stereotypes

While responding to the question that female TV journalists in Pakistani news channels are working extraordinarily and breaking stereotypes or not, 83% respondents say that women journalists are not breaking stereotypes, they are still working within the same gender roles. 17% respondents are of the view that some of the female TV journalists are working extraordinarily and are breaking stereotypes.

“Women journalists are not breaking stereotypes because they are restricted to certain limits, they can't go everywhere to do a story. I think women have to prove themselves. In my previous media group, female journalists were taken for granted, we felt worthless. We were supposed to give live hits on weather, in parks, in markets. Sometimes lower management like assignment editors don't let you work extraordinarily, they create hurdles,” says a female respondent. A male respondent says, “There are exceptions, not every girl is breaking stereotypes. Some female journalists are taking risks and challenges, but others refuse themselves. I feel that one out of ten female journalists is doing an extraordinary job.”

There is a hope that female TV journalists working hard in the newsroom in these years will be able to break glass ceiling too, as another female respondent adds, “Things are changing, I am hopeful because I can see some brave female TV journalists like Shumaila Jaffery, Rabia Noor, Henna Saeed, Huda Abbas and many other prominent and strong women who are breaking stereotypes but still there is a

long way to go for us. I am the pioneer of bringing health issues in headlines. I broke stereotypes and 12 years back my colleagues like Sana Tirmazee, Rabia Mehmood, Um-e-Farwa, Huma Sadaf and many more, we set examples of being a hardcore journalist as good as men."

Conclusion and Recommendations

This qualitative study sheds light on the persistent gender bias issues faced by female journalists working in Pakistani TV channels, examining these challenges through the lenses of the "glass ceiling" and "sticky floors" concepts. The research underscores the male-dominated nature of Pakistani newsrooms, where a toxic culture of masculine supremacy prevails, contributing to gender discrimination against female TV journalists. The findings reveal that female TV journalists encounter numerous barriers in their career progression, often finding it difficult to break through the glass ceiling and secure top-level positions. They frequently face discrimination based on their gender, and instances of workplace harassment are prevalent, though frequently unreported. Additionally, the study uncovers a complex dynamic where some female journalists resort to using their gender as a means to gain promotions, leading to obstacles for other women. Furthermore, both male and female colleagues may exhibit malicious envy towards successful female journalists. Age and appearance are disproportionately emphasized for female TV journalists, creating an unfair advantage for male counterparts whose careers often advance with age and experience. The research highlights the unfortunate reality that the career span of female journalists is notably shorter compared to male journalists, who tend to continue growing professionally and occupying senior roles. The study identifies both visible and hidden barriers faced by female TV journalists within newsrooms. To address these issues, the research recommends media houses establish a code of conduct and circulate it to all staff to raise awareness about the consequences of misconduct. It also advocates for the creation of a dedicated department within news channels to handle harassment cases thoroughly and impartially, thereby preventing abuse through harassment and misuse of gender privileges.

The study also suggests conducting workshops, lectures, and visits to sensitize newsroom employees about gender-related issues and to encourage feedback from the staff. Providing essential facilities such as day care and separate restrooms for female journalists is also proposed. Moreover, implementing permanent policies for sufficient maternity leaves is essential to support women in balancing work and family life.

Beyond the media industry, the study calls upon other institutions, including the government, judiciary, and educators, to take decisive actions in formulating strong policies against discrimination, bias, and harassment. These policies must be diligently enforced to foster an environment of gender equality and ensure that female journalists receive equal opportunities for professional growth and success.

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Annexes

With their consent, brief introduction of the journalists who are taking part in this study as respondents is as follows.

- Neelam Aslam, anchor and producer at Neo TV Lahore
- Amber Zeeshan Butt, reporter at 92 News Lahore
- Arif Hameed Bhatti, Bureau Chief at ARY News Lahore
- Saman Iqbal, correspondent at Samaa TV Lahore
- Sania Choudhary, Reporter at ARY News Lahore
- Muhammad Faheem, Reporter and anchor, Mashriq TV Peshawar
- Sadia Khan, Reporter at City 42, and 24 News Lahore
- Madiha Sumbal, Reporter at ARY News Peshawar
- Zia Ur Rahman, Reporter at Samaa TV Lahore
- Hafsa Usman, Reporter at Geo News Lahore
- Fatima Ali, Producer and Senior Reporter at Neo TV Lahore
- Afzal Majeed Butt, Senior Assignment Editor at ARY News Lahore