

THE GLASS CEILING PREVAILS

Career Paths of Pakistani
Women Journalists



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Policy Research & Advocacy Initiative



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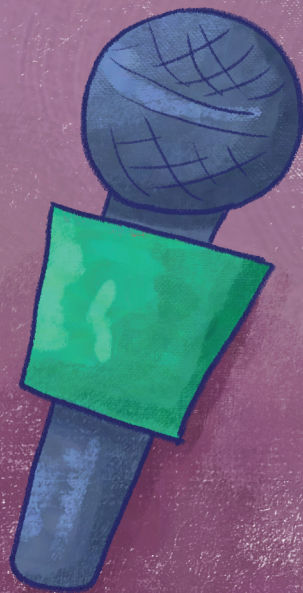
Executive Summary

Newsrooms in Pakistan lack representation of women journalists in leadership roles. This research aims to explore the factors behind why women are quitting their news careers. This survey based research study collates information from 103 women journalists working in different newsrooms across Pakistan and examines different aspects of their newsroom experience.

Following are the key findings of the survey:

- Only 1 in 34 (3%) women respondents of the survey were able to reach leadership roles.
- More than half (60%) of the respondents do not get annual pay raises in their salaries.
- Only 1 in four of respondents have received annual pay raises.
- More than three quarters (89%) of the respondents think that there is a difference in the frequency and scale with which men and women in media receive salary increments.
- Over 9 in 10 respondents believe that men and women in the media have different salary ranges.
- Almost 9 in 10 (88%) respondents believe that men and women do not have equal opportunities for career growth in media.
- Over 8 in 10 respondents (82%) said that women journalists have faced gender discrimination at some point of their career.
- Almost 7 in 10 (69%) respondents believe that the lack of women decision makers compounds the gender discrimination in newsrooms.
- Three quarters of respondents (75%) concluded that deep rooted social stereotypes account for the lack of women in decision making positions.
- Four in ten (44%) respondents said that lack of day-care facility for working women journalists also make them redundant over a period of time.
- One third of the respondents said there was no gender inclusion policy in thier newsrooms and 46% of respondents were not sure if there was any such policy for their newsrooms.
- More than half , 56% of the respondents reported having faced workplace harassment while three quarter of respondents (75%) held that harassment offline/online pushes women journalists from pursuing careers in media.
- The survey also highlighted the lack of inclusion outside the newsrooms and found that 68% of respondents are not members of any press club body and 62% do not belong to any kind of journalists union.

INTRODUCTION



Newsrooms in Pakistan- A Ministry of Manpower

For decades, women journalists have fought to establish themselves in the news media industry. Despite facing regressive cultural norms, they have persisted in breaking through the glass ceiling. Our research aimed to uncover the discrimination and obstacles preventing women journalists from achieving leadership positions. We sought to examine why women journalists with extensive experience are not given equal opportunities for career advancement compared to their male counterparts and to identify the factors contributing to the gender imbalance in the news industry. Unfortunately, our findings revealed that gender disparity still persists in newsrooms and that little effort is being made by stakeholders to address it.

In the context of Pakistan, women journalists have faced even greater cultural and social barriers in their efforts to establish themselves in the news media industry. Traditional attitudes towards women often limit their participation in the workforce, and the field of journalism is no exception. Despite this, many women journalists in Pakistan have been determined to break through these barriers and make their voices heard. However, the challenges they face are not limited to societal attitudes. The news media industry in Pakistan has been traditionally male-dominated and many newsrooms still lack female representation at the leadership level. This is reflected in the fact that women journalists are often assigned to soft news stories and are underrepresented in positions of power and decision-making. Furthermore, the lack of laws and policies to protect women against discrimination in the workplace and lack of support system for women journalists are also major obstacles for women journalists in Pakistan. This includes inadequate facilities for working mothers, lack of mentorship programs for young women journalists and lack of training programs to promote gender equality in the newsrooms.

All these factors contribute to the ongoing gender imbalance in the news industry in Pakistan and make it harder for women journalists to achieve leadership roles and progress in their careers. It is important for stakeholders in the media industry, as well as society at large, to take concrete steps towards addressing these issues and creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for women journalists in Pakistan

The lack of support systems and societal expectations for women to prioritize domestic duties have resulted in slower career progression for women journalists. They often face disrespect and their issues are neglected because they do not affect the majority. This overall lack of sensitivity is shrinking the space for women in mainstream news media and many are choosing to leave the industry. Currently, there are very few women in leadership positions in newsrooms, and even when they do hold these roles, they lack the necessary resources to fully exercise their power. These positions are often ceremonial and have little influence in decision making.

This research shows that the underrepresentation of women journalists at top positions is making the newsroom environment more male-centric. It is not surprising that in our survey, more than three-quarters of women journalists reported experiencing gender discrimination in the workplace. The aim of this research is to highlight the issues that hinder women journalists' way to success, such as the wage gap, gender discrimination, and harassment.

Research Methodology

Research Objectives

This research aims to;

- Examine the reasons for the underrepresentation of women journalists in management positions within newsrooms.
- Investigate the psychological and physical barriers preventing women from being considered for decision-making roles.
- Evaluate the presence and effectiveness of policies promoting inclusivity and support systems in place within media organizations to address these challenges.

Methodology

The research has been conducted using an integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative data has been collected to generalize results from a sample and analyzed using statistical methods, while the qualitative method seeks to offer contextualization and interpretation of the data.

An online survey was carried out in English and Urdu with 105 women journalists from 22nd August, 2022 to 26th August, 2022. The participants mainly belonged to Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore and other cities such as Quetta, Gilgit, Swat, Mardan, Kech, Hyderabad, Muzaffarabad, Muzaffargarh, and Nowshera. The women had varying degrees of experience in the media industry.

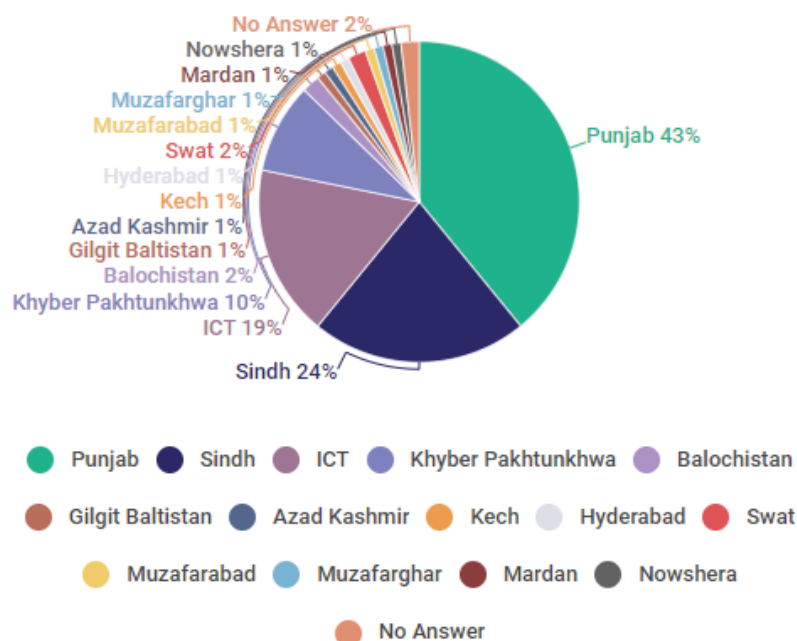


Figure 1 Demographics of Survey Respondents

Ten in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior journalists; eight with women journalists, while two with men. The interviews were conducted on the phone, virtually and via email from 25th August to 10th September, 2022.

The survey for women journalists was designed to understand the career trajectories of women journalists, the type of discrimination, if any, they face in newsrooms, and how the rise of online violence affects their work. A similar questionnaire was used for male journalists too but some questions were tilted towards asking them to identify the problems and practices in their newsrooms which are discriminatory towards women, if any.

Two separate focus group discussions were also held online via Zoom with eight women journalists, who are affiliated with the Women in Media Alliance (WIMA). The women, based in Karachi, Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, have experience in working in news mediums such as print, electronic and digital media. The focus group participants shared their experiences of working as a journalist and proposed solutions for best practices which newsrooms can adopt to make their working environment more inclusive and non-discriminatory.

Ethical Considerations and Research Limitations

- In order to protect the identities of participants, the feedback and experiences shared by women journalists in this research were anonymized. Only the research team has access to the interview and focus group recordings, and certain responses that could potentially reveal the identity of participants were not included in the research.
- The majority of women journalists who participated in the survey and interviews were based in Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, and interviews were conducted virtually. However, the researchers were unable to reach women journalists working in regions with limited internet connectivity, thus their experiences were not recorded. This lack of representation from local women journalists may have limited the depth of the overall findings and prevented the researchers from providing practical recommendations specific to them.
- To maximize the number of respondents and address linguistic limitations, the survey questionnaire was designed in both English and Urdu. However, there are also women journalists who speak regional languages and work for regional channels, and their voices and representation are not fully captured in the research.

KEY FINDINGS



Almost 8 out of 10 of the survey respondents have been discriminated on the bases of their gender;

More than 6 out of 10 respondents do not receive annual increment in their salaries, while almost 9 out of 10 believe that men and women in their newsrooms do not have the same salary range;

Eighty-six percent of respondents said that men and women do not have equal opportunity for career growth in media;

More than half of survey participants shared that they suffered workplace harassment at some point in their career;

Seven out of 10 women journalists said that they are not part of any women journalists' association stating different reasons why they feel it is not for them;

Lack of day-care facilities at mainstream news organizations pose an additional burden on working mothers in newsrooms.

Gender discrimination and challenges in newsrooms

At least 79% respondents (83) revealed that they have faced some degree of gender discrimination at some point in their careers, while 21% (22) shared that they haven't.

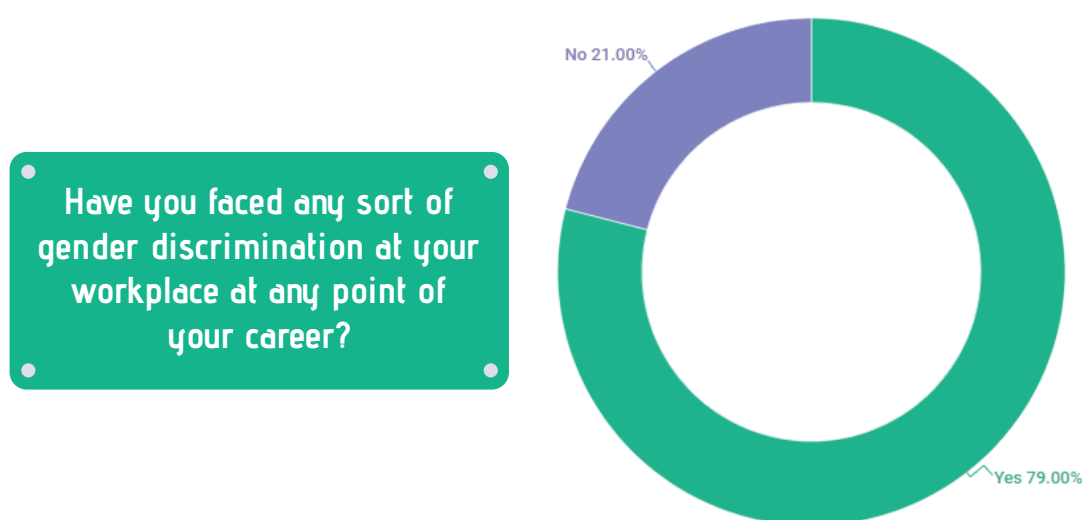


Figure 2 Gender Discrimination in Newsrooms

A close-ended question asked about the root causes of gender discrimination in newsrooms: male-dominated newsrooms, uneven distribution of opportunities to cover hard beats, pay gap, irregular work hours, and lack of women decision makers. They were given the option to select more than one option as well.

What do you think is the root cause of gender discrimination in your newsroom?

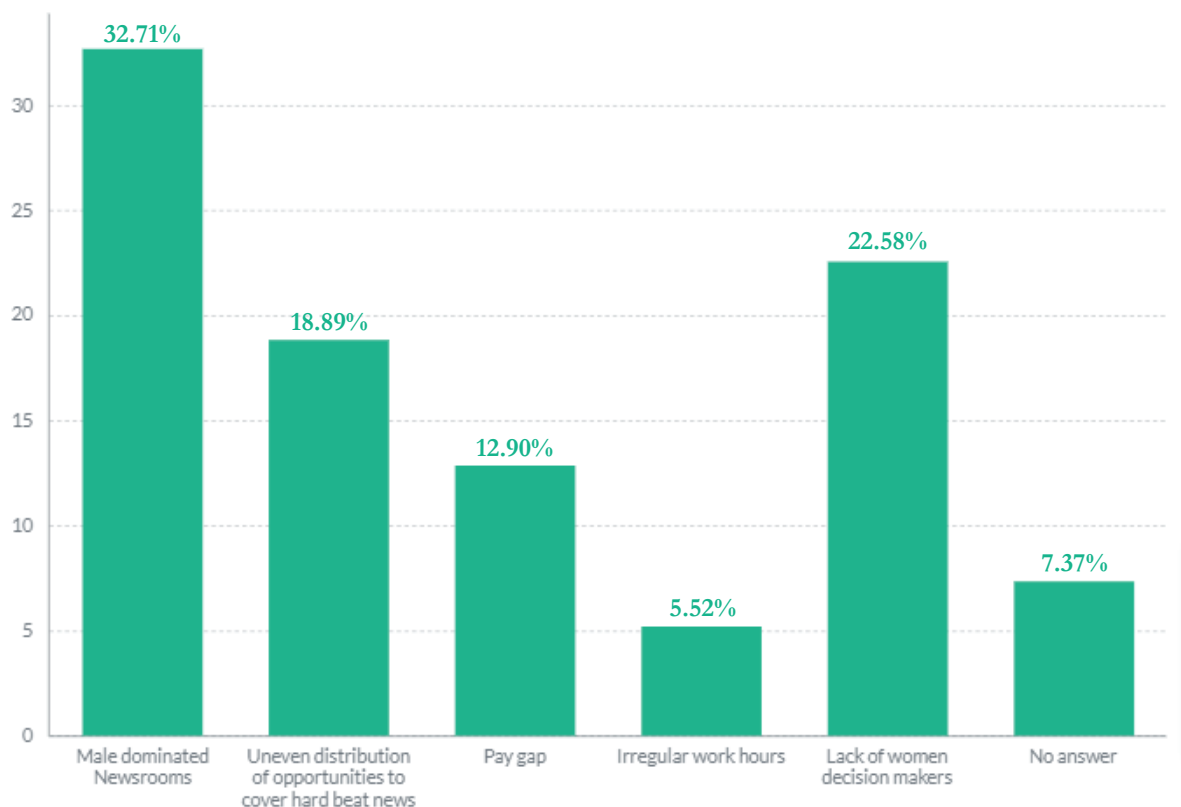



Figure 3 Root Cause of Gender Discrimination

Seventy one respondents (32.7%) said the main cause of be male-dominated newsrooms, It is important to realize that the space for women is very limited in newsrooms and news organizations as technical jobs related to programming, handling of camera equipment, videographers, drivers of DSNG vans, even the IT department which provides support to news websites are all men.




Out of 28 years of my experience, for at least 18 years I did not know much about gender discrimination. I thought this cannot happen to me or I was not aware of being its victim. I was doing my work, learning and executing. However, I have started feeling this in the past 10 years and intensely during the past four years. I have been facing it at my current workplace. I will not talk about myself but about my observations around me. We do not hire women because we will have to give them pick and drop. This discrimination also includes wage gap, lack of day care facilities.

Journalist based in Lahore

At least 22.5% of the respondents said that it's because of a lack of women decision makers in newsrooms. Women journalists in the industry are mostly given 'softer' beats such as culture or entertainment, while 'hard' beats relating to coverage on conflict zones, crime, politics and even courts is reserved for men. It's an established stereotype in newsrooms and often supported by societal structures which focus on "protecting" women journalists from the consequences of reporting in the field.

For 18.8% of the respondents the root cause was uneven distribution of opportunities to cover hard beat news. For 28 respondents, the root cause was pay gap, while irregular work hours for 12 respondents. At least 16 respondents didn't answer the question.



Less salaries and extra burden, Din newspaper had a lady chief reporter, but the organization paid her with a 6 months gap but had checked her performance on a daily basis, sometimes she couldn't take decisions due to less compatible male leadership.

One of the journalists highlighted that there is a regional difference in the attitude towards women journalists as well. She said that, "There is some value of women in Karachi. Though it's not ideal," she said, adding that media practitioners and owners in Lahore do not value their human resource. They have discriminatory attitudes towards women. Many consider hiring women as an additional burden on the organization as women will require pick and drop services, and male employees think they will "have to behave" if a woman joins the team.

Another journalist spoke about the odd timings of newsrooms which limit employment opportunities for women. It is a known fact that work starts in the evening in print newsrooms and then employees are expected to stay till late night, until pages have been sent to the press. Even today many women don't want to work during evening shifts.¹ The observation alludes to lack of security as well as socio-cultural expectations that impose time restrictions on women.

Male colleagues do not appear to be totally cognizant of the challenges women face. A male interviewee, remarked that managers are required to handle all issues related to the newsrooms and often women are allowed to pick and choose their own timings as most of them don't want to work after 9PM or 12AM due to family obligations. "There are such taboos, but take initiative. It's an open competition."

Women Managers in Newsrooms—Where are they?

Survey respondents were asked about the reasons why women remain underrepresented at leadership positions in newsrooms. They were asked to either submit their own responses or select one or more from the following options: deep-rooted stereotypes against women, cultural expectations to fulfill domestic duties, absence of diversity in newsrooms, and absence of day care facilities for mothers.

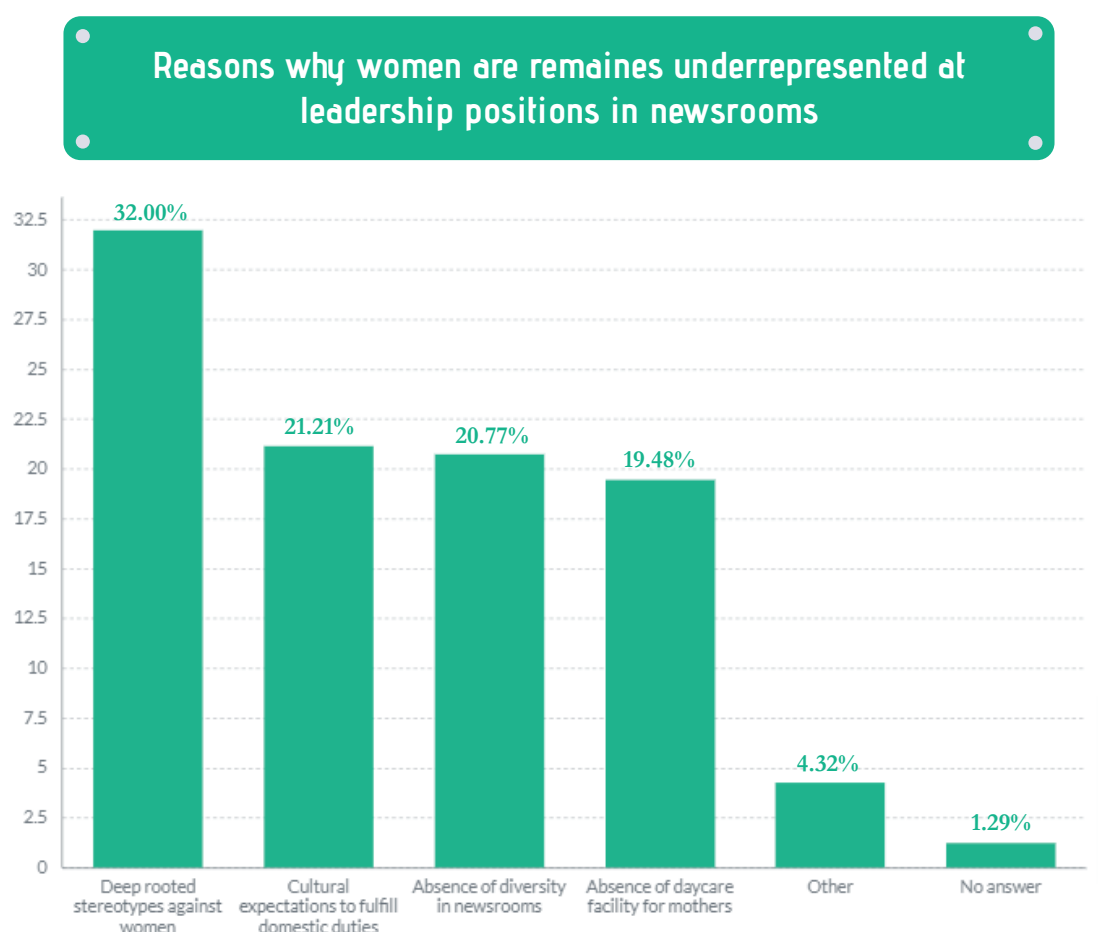


Figure 4 Reasons why women remain underrepresented in leadership roles

¹ Evening shift refers to shifts which start at 4pm, 6pm or 7pm and go on till 2am in some print newsrooms.

The data shows 32% of the respondents identified deep-rooted biases against women as one of the main reasons, while 21.2% said it's because of cultural expectations. For 20.7% of the respondents, it was the absence of diversity in newsrooms, while 19.5% said that it was due to absence of day care facilities for mothers. Three didn't answer the question, and 10 submitted their own answers.

Speaking about underrepresentation of women, Mohammed Usman, who has over 30 years of experience, said that the biggest reason is traditional expectations from women. Most women try to work as anchors, or do an eight-hour shift job in electronic and print media, which allows them to manage their job along with their families. Leadership roles or channel management is a 24-hour work day and requires constant involvement.

Women do not even get hard beats. All this comes to cultural problems and the cultural image of men and women.

Absar Alam
Senior Journalist



We also face time constraints and cannot do night shifts, while the men can.

Sheema Siddiqui



Absar Alam, a senior journalist and former PEMRA Chairperson, shared that it is primarily a cultural problem which is translated into newsrooms as well. We have a culture of violence and male dominance is associated with aggression and bullying. It is assumed that only men can perform leadership roles as they are aggressive. Capability and talent are considered secondary. He further added that, all this comes to cultural problems and the cultural image of men and women. Another interviewee, Mian Shahid, who has over twenty years of experience in journalism, expressed views similar to these. He further said that men get insecure with the progress of women. Their ideas and views are heard, but men present them as their own and take credit for it.

Ghazala Fasih, a journalist who has been in the field for around 30 years, shared that in our society only certain professions such as teaching and pursuing medicine are considered acceptable for women. Being a doctor is a fulltime job too. Women are considered sensitive and unintelligent.

Thus, it is assumed they cannot do physically and mentally demanding jobs or take up decision making roles. This taboo exists globally. Media is a field where your job takes time and requires decision making.

Gender Inclusion Policies in Newsrooms

When asked about gender inclusion policies at their workplace, 46.6% of the respondents (49) shared that they were unsure if there was any, while 33.3% (35) said that their organization has no such policy.

Does your newsroom have a gender inclusion policy?

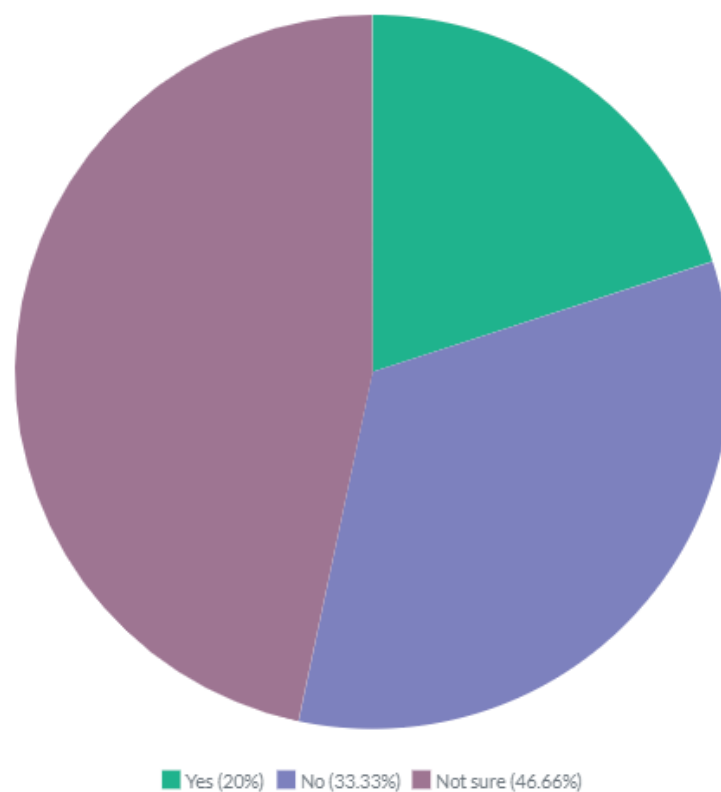


Figure 5 Gender Inclusion Policy in Newsrooms

Almost half of survey participants (46%) were sure that their newsroom does not have a regulatory/administrative framework to address the challenges women journalists endure. One in four respondents (27%) is not aware of any such framework while 29% were affirmative that their newsrooms have a policy to deal with such matters.

In another question on whether newsrooms have a regulatory or administrative framework to address the challenges women face, forty-seven participants (44.7%) said that their newsrooms have no such framework, while 25.7% of the respondents (27) weren't sure about it.

• Does your newsroom have a regulatory / administrative framework to address the challenges women face in the newsroom? •

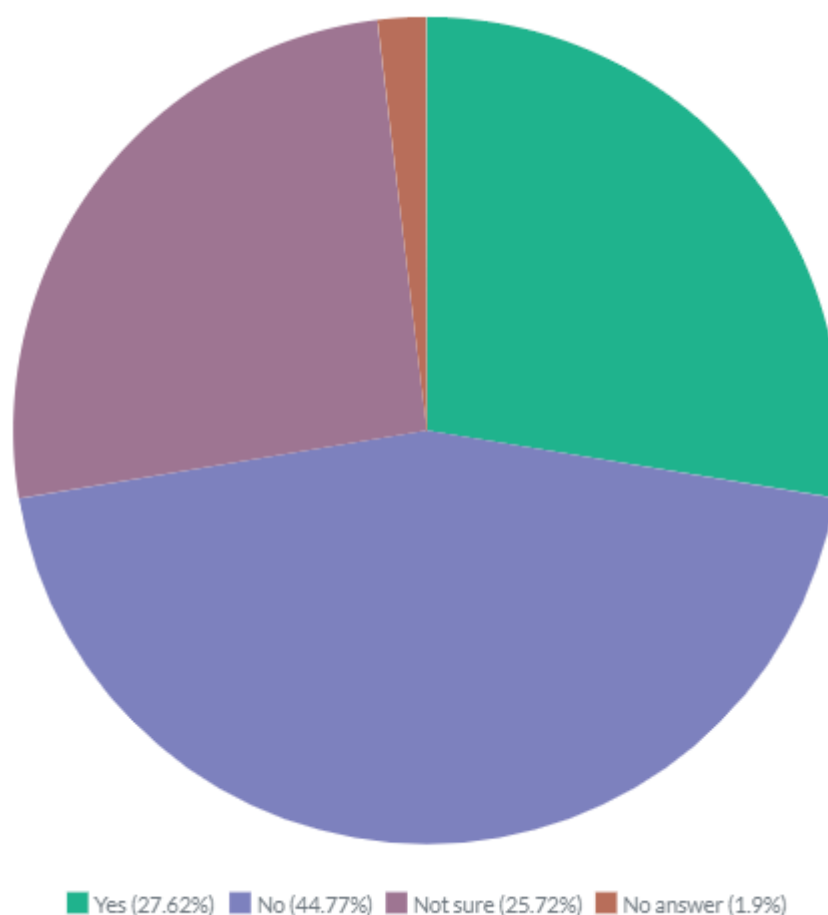


Figure 6 Regulatory Framework in Newsrooms

Career growth opportunities

The findings of the research suggest that there is a lack of career opportunities for women journalists and media practitioners in the country. The survey asked women journalists about the position at which they started their careers and what position they currently hold. According to the answers, the results have been decided in the following experience categories:

- 1 to 4 years of experience;
- 5 to 10 years of experience;

- 11 to 15 years of experience;
- 15 to 20 years of experience;
- Experience of 20 years or more.

Out of the nine respondents in the 1 to 4 years category, four women (or 44.4%) were at the same position at which they started, while three had started as trainees and were then promoted to become permanent employees, for example trainee reporters were promoted to reporters and trainee assistant producers became assistant producers. A woman who started out as a non-linear editor (NLE) quit her career after two years because of her marriage.

At least 49 respondents belonged to the 5 to 10 years of experience category. Eight women (or 16%) had the same position as when they started their careers, and the same number (16%) had quit working at a news organization. Only one managed to become deputy news editor, while majority held mid-senior positions such as senior content executive, producers, special correspondents, and program anchors, and four were working as freelance journalists.

There were 24 respondents who fell into the 11 to 15 years of experience bracket, out of which five women (or 20% of the participants) had the same job title, while four or 16% had quit their jobs at newsrooms. Only one was able to reach a senior position, deputy editor, while the majority were working as producers, correspondents, subeditors, and executive producers.

In the 16 to 20 years of experience bracket, there were 12 respondents, out of which two have quit newsrooms and two were on the same position at which they started their careers, this included a respondent whose still was still reporter even after 18 years, another started out as a broadcaster and had the same position after 17 years. In this bracket, one started her own outlet and had become a co-founder, while one with 20 years of experience was working as a news editor. The job titles for others were senior executive producer, digital media producer, reporter, program host.

There were six respondents who fell into the category of journalists with over 20 years of experience. In this category, a woman with 34 years of experience had started her own news venture, one was working as an assistant editor after 35 years of experience, while one had become bureau chief after 25 years. A journalist with an experience of 35 years was the in-charge of the children's edition at her organization. Five respondents had not specified their years of experience in the media because of which their responses couldn't be included in the data.

The data collected from this research shows that there are limited opportunities for growth and advancement for women in newsrooms. None of the women respondents were editors at their respective news organizations, or had obtained any managerial positions despite their extensive experience. The few women who held positions of power in the newsroom had done so by starting their own news organizations. Almost 10% of the respondents reported that they had quit their newsroom jobs and were working as freelance journalists, while 14% had left news organizations altogether and were working in media-related fields such as public relations and communications. This suggests that a significant portion of women journalists are leaving traditional newsroom environments in search of more opportunities and better working conditions. The fact that these women have to leave the newsroom in order to advance their career highlights the lack of opportunities for women within the traditional newsroom set up.

Pay Gap in Newsrooms

According to survey findings, 63 respondents (60%) said that they do not receive annual increments in their salaries, while 26 (or 25% of the respondents) receive them. The remaining 16 responses were clubbed as 'Others', in which participants shared the number of times they have received increments, A journalist even revealed that she has received a pay raise only three or four times in her 14 years of employment.

Do you receive an annual increment in your salary?

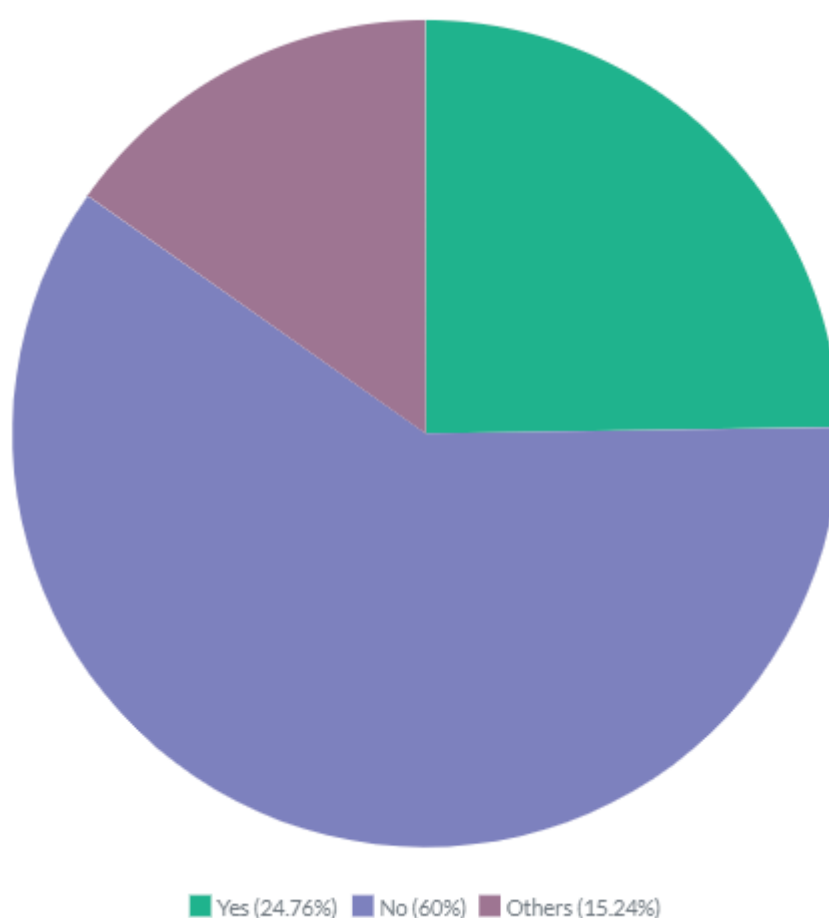


Figure 7 Salary Increments

One of the respondents shared that her organization gave annual increments regularly but things changed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. She did, however, add that they have resumed giving increments recently. Another remarked that her organization had discontinued them because of cost-cutting measures, but some of her colleagues were still getting them for being the “favorites of the bosses”.

The respondents were also asked to compare their salaries, number of increments, and opportunity for career advancement to their male counterparts. More than eight out of 10 (82.8%) respondents shared that men and women in media don't have the equal opportunity for career growth in media, while 86.6% said that media and women don't have the same salary ranges. Over 84% of the respondents shared that men and women don't receive the same salary increments.

Please share your opinions on the following statements

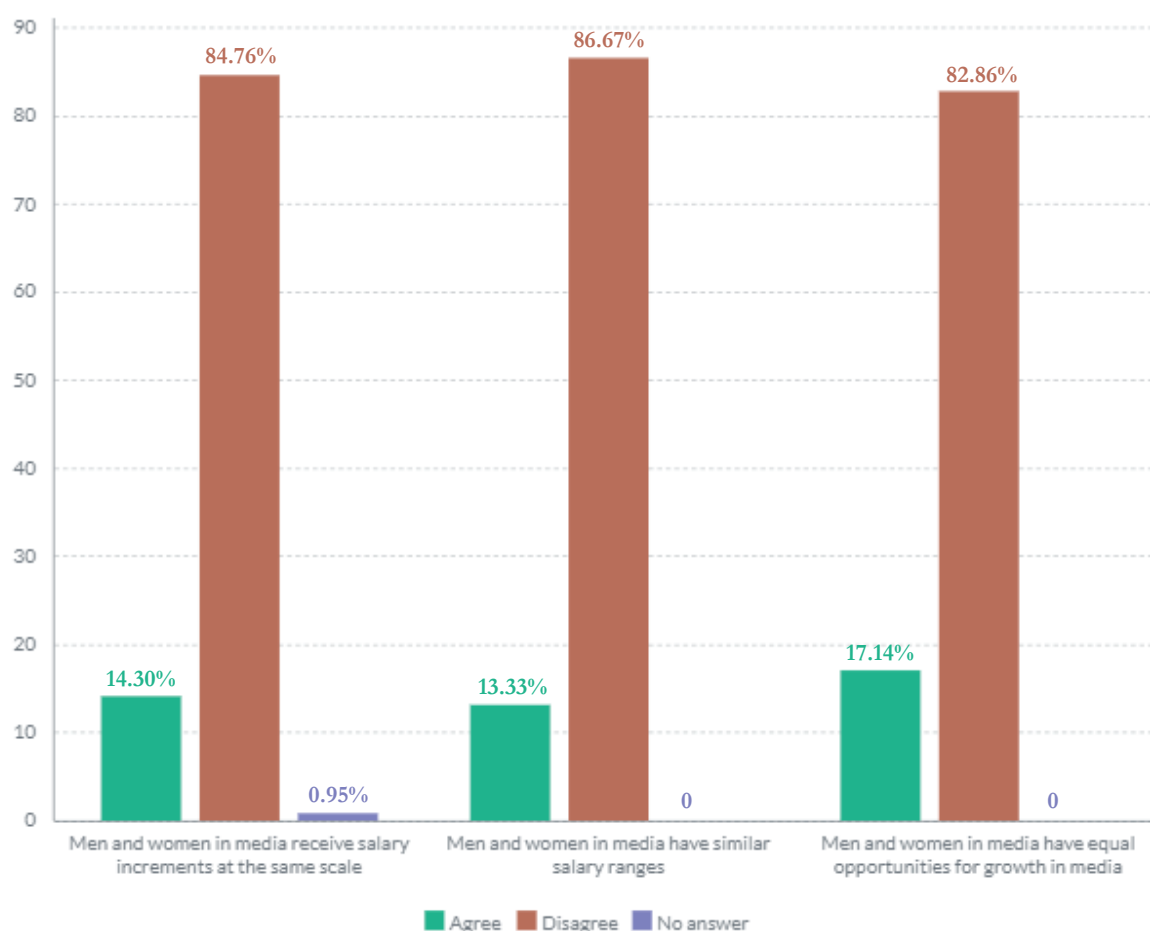


Figure 8 Comparison of Career Growth Opportunities

During in-depth interviews, men held women responsible for this unfair share of opportunities and wage gap because of the social and cultural barriers they face. This, however, shows little realization at the end of male journalists who fail to see that women are not part of the problem, but at its receiving end.

During in-depth interviews, men held women responsible for this unfair share of opportunities and wage gap because of the social and cultural barriers they face. This, however, shows little realization at the end of male journalists who fail to see that women are not part of the problem, but at its receiving end.

Workplace Harassment—Yes It Exists!

More than half, 55.2% of the respondents shared that they have experienced workplace harassment at some point in their career.

Have you ever experienced harassment at workplace?

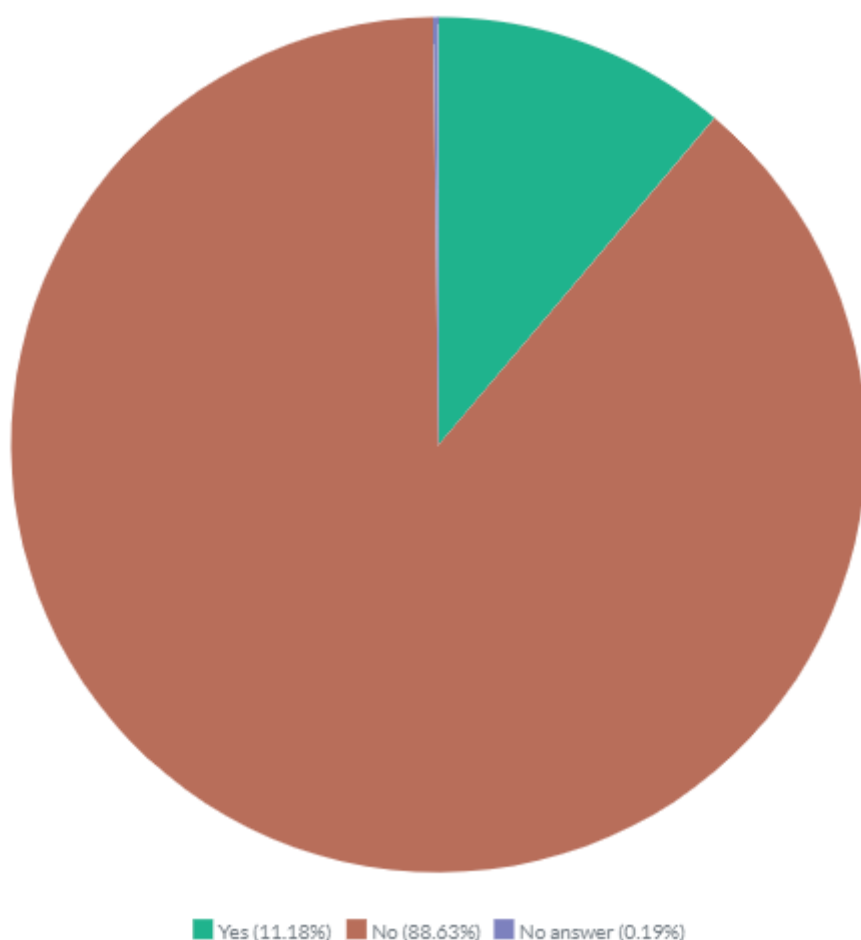


Figure 9 Workplace Harassment

Almost three quarters, 73.3% of the respondents said that workplace harassment and violence against women in online and offline spaces contribute to their underrepresentation of women in newsrooms.

• Do you believe that workplace harassment and online / offline violence add to underrepresentation of women in newsrooms? •

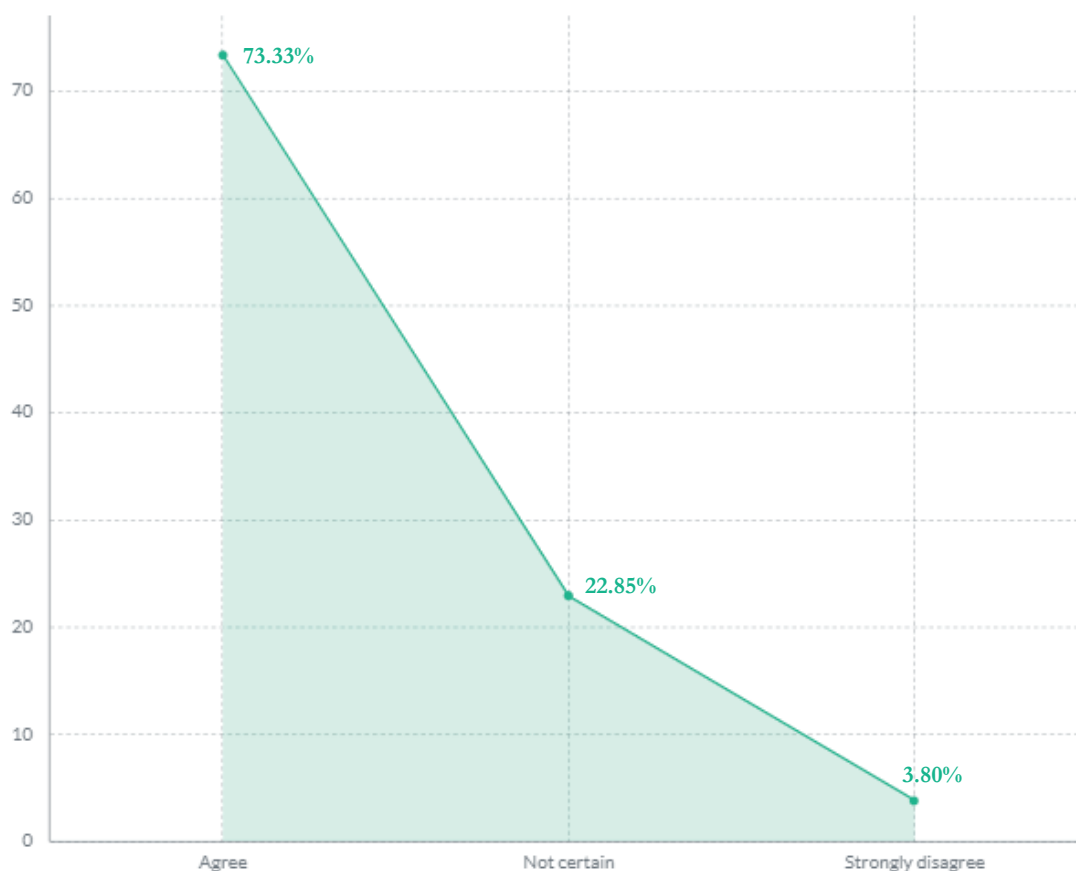


Figure 10 Link between harassment and underrepresentation of women

Interviewees shared that women journalists face varying forms of harassment, including online trolling, sexual and legal harassment, as well as bullying in their newsrooms. Quite often this leads to their exit from newsrooms, or their silencing in online spaces. In recent years, vicious online campaigns have been launched against women journalists which dent their credibility as journalists, allow people to denigrate their personalities and make online spaces unsafe for them.² As a result, women journalists are coerced into self-censoring their posts.

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1574031>

Harassment not only reduces their representation but prevents women from performing to their full potential

Shahneela Raza
Senior Journalist
Lahore



Senior Journalist Afia Salam shared, in her interview, that she believes that harassment is one of the leading causes for underrepresentation of women in newsrooms. Similar reviews were endorsed by other interviewees. Harassment not only affects representation of women but prevents them from performing to their full potential.

The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 has made it compulsory for all organizations in Pakistan to constitute a harassment committee, which shall consist of three members, including a woman.³ Despite the law, there are many news channels in Pakistan which don't have harassment committees, an interviewee revealed, making it more difficult for women to file their complaints.

Role of Associations and Journalist Unions

Almost seven out of ten women journalists shared that they were not affiliated with any press club. Survey respondents were also asked if they can share how press clubs have helped them solve their issues. One respondent shared that she had to struggle a lot to get press club membership because she is the only woman journalist in her region and no one was willing to accommodate her. Another respondent said that her membership helped her get in touch with the journalist community but in terms of work, there was very little help.

An early career journalist did, however, say that her press club membership helped her tremendously, adding that one member helped her get her salary from a media house whose director news declined to give her the salary as she refused his offer to go on a date and then resigned. A respondent, who is an active member of the Karachi Press Club, said that she has limited access to different committees working under KPC and the body governing the affairs of the club has limited women representation.

Sixty-two percent of the respondents (65) shared that they are not members of any journalist union.

Are you a member of a journalist union?

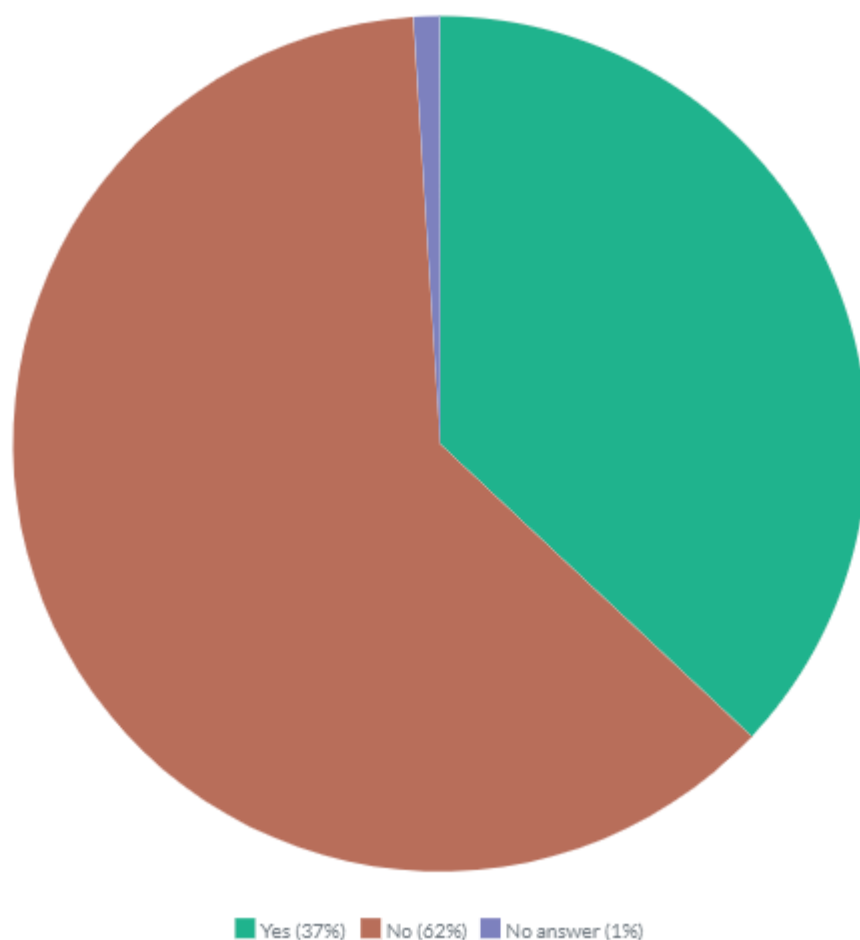



Figure 11 Association with Journalists' Unions

I have been elected as part of the governing body of a press club twice; one time as General Secretary and then as Joint Secretary. None of these posts benefited me in any way.


A mid-career journalist





I have never been a member of any press club. Two decades ago, press clubs didn't even offer membership to women journalists. The press club in my city didn't consider TV anchors as journalists and refused to give me membership. Interestingly, the same press club offered membership to many government employees along with benefits available to media practitioners.

Senior journalist



Press clubs and other associations have made their own lobbies. If you try to seek help for any issue related to your workplace, then you might get fired. So why take the risk when you know there aren't many opportunities available to women at senior level? It's better for women to keep their mouth shut, bear everything and keep moving. That's what our society is all about

Senior journalist

Missing In Action: Working Mothers

All 10 interviewees agreed that there is little to zero support for working women journalists, especially if they are mothers. Najia Ashar, a former anchorperson and media development practitioner, remarked that women need support at their workplace when they become mothers. They should be given a safe and healthy environment where they can bring up their children without compromising on their mental health. In newsrooms, married women are often considered as a liability towards organization as their domestic responsibilities increase more than a man. Every action of a married woman is scrutinized, so even asking for a legit sick leave becomes arduous for her. Organizations need to take practical steps if they really want to accommodate women in leadership roles. Inclusion and diversity are limited to theory in the media, Ashar added.

Absar Alam, a senior journalist and former PEMRA chairman, believes that it is because of cultural stigma that a woman can work, but not a mother. A big obstacle in the way is the lack of day care facilities across newsrooms.

Mian Shahid shared that none of his women employees complained about the lack of day care facilities at his organizations but he has seen them suffering as a consequence. One of the focus group participants, journalist and researcher, Sheema Siddiqui, said that mainstream media should be legally bound to provide daycare facilities, adding that Jang News ended up giving a space to working mothers because many of their employees were in need of it.

According to the interviewees, none of the mainstream news outlets provide daycare facilities for their staff. Despite having large buildings and ample space to accommodate various departments, providing daycare is not considered a priority. The interviewees unanimously agreed that this one facility could have a significant positive impact on the career growth for women journalists. Women journalists shared they have often tried to bring babies to offices and pay a helper to keep an eye on their babies as their work but it hasn't proven to be a sustainable practice.

The lack of child care support is a major reason mother journalists end up quitting their careers. Senior women journalists in their interviews revealed that there is little to zero empathy for women journalists who have babies or are expecting. Often their maternity leave is considered as a luxury vacation period that they might be enjoying. Women feel unnecessary pressure of returning to jobs right after having babies as there is general job insecurity. They fear that someone else might take up their spot so they feel extra pressure while already going through a rush of emotions that the postpartum period brings.

ANALYSIS



Gender discrimination is prevalent in the news media industry in Pakistan, due to patriarchal culture and social stereotypes that absolve men of moral accountability. The lack of support systems and facilities for women in newsrooms, such as daycare and proper washrooms, make it difficult for women journalists to advance in their careers, especially after marriage and having children. This lack of support also perpetuates the problems for women journalists. This large percentage indicates that our newsrooms might have placed women in working positions but they are not prepared to accommodate them. There is no structure designed that can look at the basic needs and workplace requirements that are essential for women.

For women journalists, the challenges of balancing their careers and family responsibilities can make it difficult for them to advance in their careers, particularly after marriage and the birth of children. The lack of support systems in newsrooms for working mothers further exacerbates this issue, as they are forced to make difficult choices between their careers and their family obligations. This lack of support also perpetuates the problems for women journalists, as they are often held to a different standard than their male counterparts, who do not face the same cultural expectations and responsibilities.

Mahim Maher, senior journalist, agreed that it becomes extremely tough for mothers to continue working under such circumstances, adding that newsrooms don't even have proper washrooms for women. Salaries are not given on time and there are no harassment committees in channels and this makes women question their job options.

The lack of networking and mentorship opportunities for women can also be a barrier to their advancement in the industry. In a conservative society like Pakistan, women face judgment, discrimination and character assassination if they are seen meeting and conversing with sources, whereas men never face such issues. This can make it difficult for women to build the relationships and networks necessary to advance in their careers.

When it comes to leadership roles in newsrooms, it is often perceived that these positions require an individual to possess certain traits such as aggression and a tendency to be a "bully". This perception is further perpetuated by the stereotype that femininity is incompatible with leadership. However, this notion is not entirely accurate, as many interviewees had a different approach to this question. While some agreed with this perception, others disagreed and stated that women themselves often do not prefer leadership roles due to domestic responsibilities. Journalist Sheema Siddique, for example, disagreed with this notion and highlighted that there are indeed senior women journalists who hold leadership positions in print media, such as editors. These women possess the necessary skills and expertise to effectively run a team. She also shared an incident where she raised concern about a male reporter covering a child rape incident instead of her, despite her qualifications and experience. The response she received was that it was not appropriate for a woman to cover such a story given the mindset of the newsroom. This highlights the issue of unconscious biases and stereotypes that exist in the news industry, preventing women from reaching leadership positions and being given the opportunity to cover important and impactful stories. It also shows the lack of support and understanding for women who wish to balance their domestic responsibilities with their career aspirations. It is important for news organizations to recognize and address these biases and provide support systems to women who wish to pursue leadership roles in the industry.

Mahim Maher, a senior journalist, highlighted another issue in the pattern of discrimination and

lack of support for women journalists in newsrooms. She observed that while women may excel in their jobs, the retention rate for women in the industry is lower than for men. This is likely due to a number of factors, including the financial disparities between men and women in the industry, as well as the prevalence of harassment and an insecure work environment. Maher also pointed out that it seems that men in mainstream media are not always welcoming of women in the industry, and that this is a matter of mentality and mindset. She acknowledged that women have to actively claim their space in the industry, as it is not always given to them willingly. She also said that there are times when boundaries are not respected, and that the digital space has provided more opportunities for women to succeed in the industry. Maher shared that she has experienced men not listening to her, but that her skills and the support of her news director have helped her to be taken seriously. She also believes that there are tactics that can be used to survive and succeed in a male-dominated industry, but acknowledges that it can be challenging. Overall, Maher's experiences and observations highlight the ongoing struggle for women to be recognized and supported in the news industry, and the need for ongoing efforts to address these issues and improve the experiences of women journalists.

Broadcast journalist and founder of the Global News Media Institute (GNMI), Najia Ashar, also recognizes the expectation placed on women to conform to a specific, aggressive leadership style. According to her, when women are not assertive and instead exhibit politeness and good behavior, they are often perceived as being sensitive. While assertiveness and a certain attitude are important qualities for leadership, these traits are viewed differently when exhibited by men and women. Men who exhibit assertiveness and confidence are seen as powerful and taken seriously by staff, while women who exhibit the same traits are often labeled as "mad" or "frustrated." Another interviewee, Usman, acknowledges this attitude but believes that women can excel in leadership roles in the newsroom. He encourages women to seize opportunities for leadership positions whenever they arise.

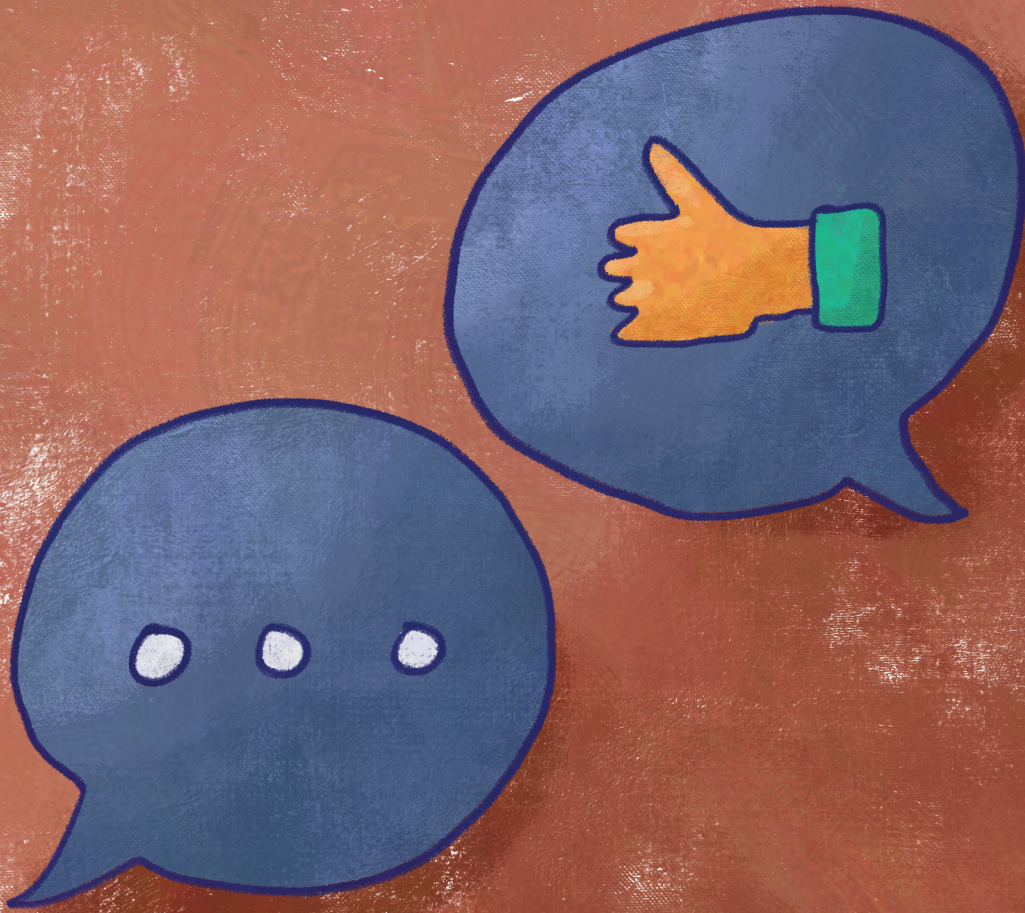
The data suggests that the situation for women journalists in print media is slightly better, as they have a strong command of language and are able to become senior editors. However, the competition in electronic media is fierce and the challenges are different as the system in which these newsrooms operate was not designed with women in mind. Wage gap and inconsistent or no allocation of annual increment are major factors that put barriers in their progression. One of the major barriers that women journalists face is the wage gap and inconsistent allocation of annual increments. Pay raises are often given based on the type of assignment a journalist is performing and since women are not typically given hard beats, they fall behind, resulting in a gender-pay gap. This means that women who have equal and sufficient knowledge for their job do not feel that they are being paid fairly in comparison to their male counterparts. This is an indication that the newsroom is not accommodating women as equal and recognizing their contributions.

Despite the progress made towards gender equality in recent years, many women in the field continue to face discrimination and bias in the workplace. This has led to a significant number of female journalists choosing to leave the profession or to start their own ventures as a way to take control of their careers and to have a platform to share their voices. One way that women journalists have found to reclaim their voices is by starting their own digital startups. This can include launching a YouTube channel, running a news website, or building a personal brand on social media. These platforms allow women journalists to bypass traditional gatekeepers and to reach a wider audience with their stories and perspectives. Additionally, by starting their own

ventures, women journalists are able to create a more inclusive and equitable work environment for themselves and for other women in the industry.



RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Implement policies that promote inclusion and equity in the newsroom. This includes creating a more diverse and representative workforce, providing equal opportunities for advancement, and addressing issues such as the gender pay gap.
2. Establish support systems within media organizations to help women journalists navigate the challenges they face. This could include providing access to daycare facilities, flexible working arrangements, and mentorship programs.
3. Address the issue of unconscious bias and stereotypes that prevent women from being considered for leadership roles. This could be done by providing training and resources to help managers and staff recognize and overcome these biases.
4. Create a culture of transparency and accountability within news organizations by establishing clear policies and procedures for reporting and addressing discrimination, harassment and other forms of mistreatment.
5. Encourage women journalists to take on leadership roles and provide them with the resources and support they need to succeed. This could include providing training, mentorship, and networking opportunities, and promoting the contributions of women journalists to the wider community.
6. Foster a culture of collaboration and teamwork within news organizations, where all staff are encouraged to contribute their ideas, skills and perspectives. This will help to create a more inclusive and equitable work environment for all staff, including women journalists.
7. Implement a comprehensive diversity and inclusion training program for all employees in the newsroom, with a focus on understanding and combating gender bias and discrimination.
8. Create a mentorship program for women journalists, connecting them with experienced female leaders in the industry to provide guidance, support and networking opportunities.
9. Establish a clear and transparent promotion process, with clear criteria and opportunities for professional development, to ensure that women journalists have equal chances to advance in their careers.

