

Status of women journalists in Delhi NCR: An analytical study

Neha Vats Kacker¹

PhD Scholar, Department of Continuing Education and Extension, University of Delhi

Dr Devender Bhardwaj²

Supervisor, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi

Dr. Jai Prakash Dubey³

Co-supervisor, Prof. Department of Continuing Education & Extension, University of Delhi

The women of Bharat constitute nearly half of the population. They are key stakeholders in the development of our nation through the crucial roles they play in several critical areas. Journalism is one such area where women have been making immensely valuable and progressive contributions in facilitating the development processes in society by assuming roles of responsibility. However, such roles present formidable challenges which women have demonstrated to navigate with remarkable courage and conviction. The present paper is an attempt to understand the status of women journalists from Delhi NCR, working as reporters, editors and amongst other diverse capacities, examining gender issues experienced both physically and psychologically at the workplace.

In the research piece, a random questionnaire survey took place using a Google Form, and journalists from the Delhi NCR region were interviewed using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. I applied dichotomous, closed-ended questions in the questionnaire. Using a questionnaire, journalists from Delhi NCR with varying media backgrounds took part. Interviews with media figures were used to validate the quantitative data to understand the current issues and status of female journalists.

The study makes the points that follow: more women in reporting and higher positions, security measures, the inevitable need to improve the lawful system for safe ground, newsrooms that are sensitive, and the same expectations placed on male and female journalists if we want to see further progress in the status of women journalists. As a result, the proportion of women journalists is expected to increase as more and more women positively pursue the honest and courageous career of journalism in the future.

□ Keywords: Journalism, Women journalist, Delhi- NCR, Challenges, status, journalism-oriented jobs.

- Introduction

The profession of journalism encompasses various dimensions, including roles, reputation, power, and risk, which collectively attract aspiring individuals. Notably, the element of risk varies and has differential impacts based on the gender of the professional. This field demands



not only passion, dedication, and professional competence but also the capacity to endure long and irregular working hours, manage stress arising from challenging situations, such as extensive travel to report from adverse locations, address breaking news, take infrequent leaves of absence, and optimistically prioritize professional commitments over personal life. Employment in the media industry is both intellectually stimulating and demanding. According to World Bank data, the employment rate of women in India declined from 26% to 19% between 2010 and 2020.

According to the 2011 census, the total number of employed Indian women is 149.8 million. Of this population, 28.0 million women are employed in urban areas, while 121.8 million are employed in rural regions. Additionally, 35.9 million women are engaged in cultivation, and 61.5 million are involved in agricultural work.

In terms of journalism-related occupations, the percentage of female journalists has not significantly increased. Journalism, as we all know, is the process of obtaining, evaluating, producing, and presenting news and information. As stated by Ammu Joseph, author of *Women in Journalism, Making News*, “A long-time media consultant and observer analyses the various ways in which gender and gender-related issues affect women in journalism, and presents a frank and forthright picture of the ups and downs of this fascinating field.”

“Women Journalists in India,” written by the renowned journalist R. Akhileshwari, explores the obstacles faced by female journalists in India compared to those in other countries. She shares her experience of moving to Hyderabad, where she found it difficult to find a job despite having three years of experience and two awards to her name, as media organisations at the time already employed a female reporter and considered hiring another to be an unnecessary expense. However, through her determination, she ultimately succeeded in becoming a foreign correspondent.

Based on earlier studies, there were not many women journalists. The question that now arises is whether there has been any change in the current situation. When I recently spoke with one of the female journalists about the poll using a Google Form, I was surprised to find out that there are only ten or fewer of them in Meerut. This is yet another curious finding. Even though there are comparatively fewer women journalists in India, we can still find women working as anchors, editors, and journalists in news channels, newspapers, and magazines.

The sixth edition of the study by the Global Media Monitoring Project, which was supported out in India in partnership with the Network of Women in Media (NWMI), showed the presence of women in news as subjects and sources “dropped sharply” in the country last year to 14% across print, TV, and radio as against 22% in 2010 and 21% in 2015. The latest India report also quotes “The job losses and realignments that have unfolded as a result have had a significant impact on women journalists as well. Many have moved on – not always by choice – from employment in major media organizations to independent journalism, which is more precarious.”



It is evident why the majority of female journalists remain lacking in the field when we compare the challenges faced by female journalists with those of political journalism. It was all about the female journalists in the city. We'll now focus on the challenges faced by women in rural areas. In an article, Kavita from Khabar Laharia tells that Chitrakoot and Banda are dacoit-dominated areas. Kavita says that it is not easy for Dalit tribal and minority women to work in male-dominated occupations in such areas. She says that there is a lot of pressure on us from the people that being women, publish news against us when big newspapers do not bring out news against us, how dare you?

The absence of the byline in the publication could be due to these pressures. Such threats and uninvited character assassinations are usual for female journalists, especially those in remote areas.

Articles by Disha Mullick Playing Reporter: Small-town women journalists in north India Findings reveal “The space between, and the play roles of a good woman (honourable) and good journalist (besharam and shameless) with all the contradictions and agency this involves were very revealing for the kinds of limits and possibilities for women in a field like journalism” through the experiences of women working as a reporter.

One more survey Pamela Bhagat's executive summary, "Status of women journalists in the print media," identifies the obstacles that prevent women journalists from pursuing possibilities in the print media. Firstly, “Newspapers are high-pressure environments where male gender, talent and hustle are unquestionable tickets to success. Secondly, Women are sometimes hampered because they refuse to assimilate into the work culture.” They need to be more aggressive to promote work, and most of the time, face discouraging stereotypes about their abilities.

The fourth pillar of democracy, the media, is important for preserving democracy. As always, in order for the idea of a balanced society to become a reality in the modern world, the media must be a genuine source of information, a source of inspiration and guidance, a patriot, and a social worker. Because social media makes it so easy for fake news and agendas to spread, journalists currently face a novel and special challenge in educating the public about significant information and lies. These challenges doubled when women journalists took on the task of disseminating information, and online harassment is another problem that exists today. According to a think tank, Demos' analysis of over 2 million tweets, female journalists received nearly three times as many abusive remarks on Twitter as their male counterparts.

Here, the literature reviews provide a few takes on the situation of Indian women journalists. The article is divided into four parts. To determine the goal, we looked at a literature review of earlier stories and articles in the first section. The study's methodology is explained in the section that follows. The third section uses a questionnaire to collect data while interacting with female reporters and media personalities. The final section will provide a summary based on media personalities' comments.

- Literature Review

Journalism, which calls for zeal, talent, and perseverance, is frequently regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy. These qualities, however, must be combined with the capacity to discuss an intricate fabric of societal expectations, workplace discrimination, and gendered barriers for women in the field. Women journalists in India still face obstacles that hinder their advancement in the field and prevent them from holding important positions, despite their invaluable contributions to the media sector.

Ammu Joseph (2005) explores how gender impacts women's careers in journalism, focusing on how gendered expectations influence the kinds of stories women can report and the positions they occupy within newsrooms. Her analysis suggests that women journalists are often assigned roles that align with traditional gender norms and are typically excluded from decision-making positions (Joseph, 2005). These patterns of exclusion and stereotyping continue to persist despite the professional qualifications of female journalists.

The representation of women in the media is another critical issue. In her study *Images of Women in Print Media*, Uma Joshi (2006) examines how the portrayal of women in print journalism reinforces societal stereotypes. Joshi highlights that women are often confined to roles that emphasize their physical appearance or familial roles, rather than their professional expertise. In a successful professional, it is not just a barrier but also limits the scope of issues that women can cover in the media.

R. Akhileshwari (2014), in *Women Journalists in India: Swimming Against the Tide*, provides a personal account of the systemic barriers faced by women journalists. She describes her own experience of being rejected by media outlets in Hyderabad despite her qualifications, illustrating the challenges that women face in gaining employment in competitive media spaces. Akhileshwari's eventual success as an international correspondent exemplifies the perseverance required for women to succeed in this field (Akhileshwari, 2014).

The gender disparity in the workforce is a persistent issue in India. According to the World Bank (2022), the percentage of working women in India dropped from 26% in 2010 to 19% in 2020, with significant underrepresentation in sectors like journalism. The Census of India (2011) reports that out of the 149.8 million employed women in India, only 28 million are employed in urban sectors such as media, while 121.8 million women work in rural sectors, predominantly in agriculture (Labour.gov.in, 2023). This highlights the urban-rural divide in women's employment, with limited opportunities for women in urban professions like journalism.

Despite this, women's representation in journalism remains low, especially in higher editorial roles. According to the National Commission for Women (NCW) report (2015), many media houses are still dominated by male leadership, which perpetuates gender inequality. Even when women do enter the profession, they are often relegated to subordinate roles that lack decision-making power.



The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), in partnership with the Network of Women in Media, India (NWMI), revealed alarming statistics about women's underrepresentation in the news. According to the study, the presence of women in Indian news as subjects and sources dropped from 22% in 2010 to 14% in 2020. Moreover, the representation of women in key news categories such as politics was found to be particularly low, with women constituting only 11% of the sources in political stories (NWMI, 2021). This underrepresentation is compounded by the types of stories women are featured in, which are often limited to gender-related issues rather than core news beats like economics and politics.

These findings underscore a broader issue in journalism: while women journalists are present in the industry, they are often sidelined or confined to roles that reinforce gendered stereotypes. Their participation is particularly low in politically significant or investigative reporting, areas where male journalists dominate.

For women journalists in rural India, the challenges are even more pronounced. Disha Mullick (2015), in her article *Playing Reporter*, explores the complex intersection of gender, caste, and rurality in shaping the experiences of women journalists. Her study of women reporters from rural northern India reveals that these journalists face immense pressure from their communities to conform to traditional gender roles. In areas like Chitrakoot and Banda, where women journalists report on sensitive issues, they are often subjected to threats, social ostracization, and harassment (Mullick, 2015).

The work of Kavita from Khabar Lahariya, a rural media outlet, provides further insight into the challenges faced by Dalit and tribal women journalists. In regions dominated by criminal cartels, women journalists risk their safety to report on issues that others avoid. Kavita's narrative highlights the risks involved in covering politically sensitive stories and the additional layer of threat faced by women working in male-dominated spaces (Communication Today, 2015).

Gendered power dynamics in newsrooms also hinder the progress of women journalists. Manjari K. (2002), in her paper presented at the National Workshop on Women in Journalism, notes that women journalists are often judged by a different set of standards than their male counterparts. The newsroom culture in India is predominantly masculine, and women journalists are expected to assimilate into this culture to succeed. This often involves adopting aggressive, competitive behaviors that are at odds with the social expectations placed on women (Manjari, 2002).

Pamela Bhagat's (2015) executive summary on the Status of Women Journalists in India further explores this issue. Bhagat identifies a pervasive "boys' club" mentality in newsrooms, where women who do not conform to masculine ideals face resistance and are often relegated to less prestigious roles. The pressure to "be more aggressive" and prove themselves as capable as male colleagues is a major obstacle for women in the profession (Bhagat, 2015).

The rise of digital platforms has created new challenges for women journalists. Demos (2021), a think tank that analyzed over 2 million tweets, found that female journalists experience nearly



three times more abusive comments than their male counterparts. Online harassment has become an increasingly prevalent issue, particularly for women who report on controversial or politically sensitive topics. This abuse often takes the form of gendered violence, including threats of sexual assault, which further deters women from fully engaging in the media landscape (Deccan Herald, 2021).

An intense tool for influencing public opinion and holding those in positions of authority accountable is the media. But journalism's democratic potential is undermined by its lack of gender parity. Discrimination against female journalists is multifaceted and restricts their ability to influence news narratives. Given these obstacles, media companies urgently need to implement institutional changes, such as gender-sensitive policies, enhanced security protocols, and greater opportunities for women in leadership roles.

Thus, Indian women journalists are still fighting against long-standing gender biases in the newsroom and in society at large. Despite the many obstacles, women in the field have shown admirable tenacity and fortitude. However, societal and institutional changes are necessary for real progress to be made. The main obstacles that women in journalism face have been brought to light by this review of the literature, which has also set the stage for future research on the situation of Indian women journalists, especially those working in rural and urban areas.

- Objectives

- ✓ To know the latest Conditions of women journalists in the workplace.
- ✓ To know the level of gender issues, if they still exist.
- ✓ To know the physical and psychological issues faced by a woman journalist on and off the field.
- ✓ To know how much women journalists get the liberty to be vocal on social, political, and sensitive issues.

- Methodology

After going through the literature review on women journalists we are getting an idea of how the life of women journalists is going through uncertainty because this profession demands extra working hours, apart from these women are confronted with trouble in receipt of opportunities, the disparity in receiving salary and positions too, stereotype mindset of patriarchal society, and high-level risk while doing investigative journalism in past years. Now the objectives of this research paper are to find out the status of women journalists in Delhi NCR: An analytical case study. By having a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in this research paper, a random questionnaire survey via Google form and interacting with journalists of the Delhi-NCR region- UP, Rajasthan & Haryana. In the questionnaire, I used closed-ended questions with a dichotomous form. 20 women journalists of different media backgrounds from Delhi NCR

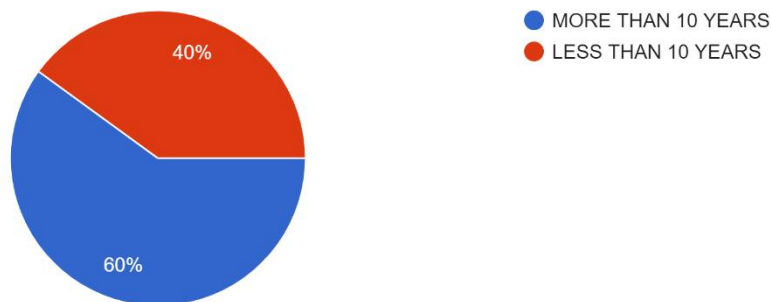
participated through a questionnaire. These quantitative data were validated by interviews with media personalities to know Today's challenges and the status of women journalists.

- Findings

The research effort adopted a mixed-method approach, including semi-structured interviews and a dichotomous, closed-ended 15-question survey in a structured Google Form, to evaluate the status of women journalists in the Delhi NCR area, including respondents from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Haryana. Twenty women journalists from print, electronic, and digital media in all replied.

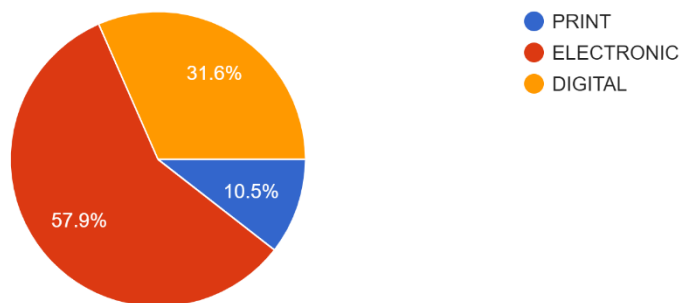
1. YEARS IN THE MEDIA INDUSTRY?

20 responses



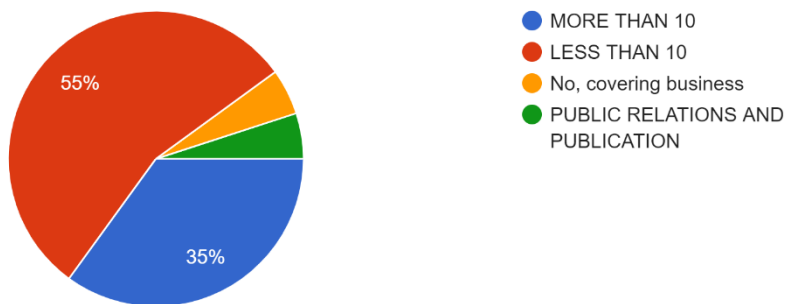
2. AREA OF WORKING

19 responses



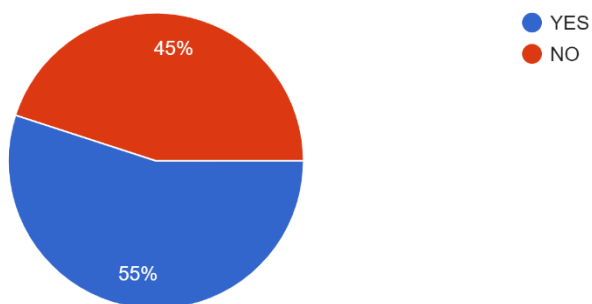
3. FEMALE JOURNALISTS WORKING ON POLITICAL OR INVESTIGATIVE ASSIGNMENTS?

20 responses



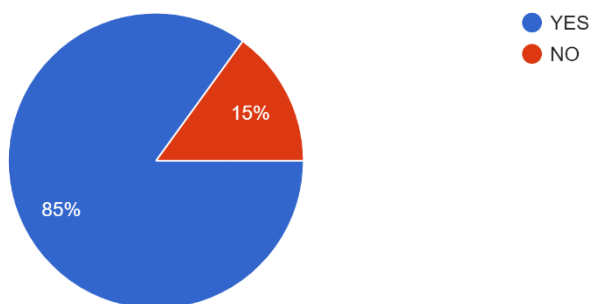
4. DO NIGHT SHIFTS OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS SHOW GENDER EQUALITY?

20 responses



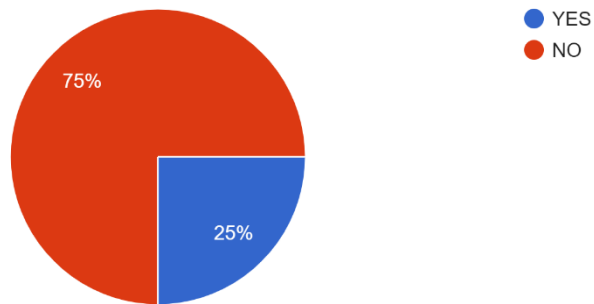
5. HAVE YOU SEEN FEMALE JOURNALISTS FACING GENDER BIAS?

20 responses



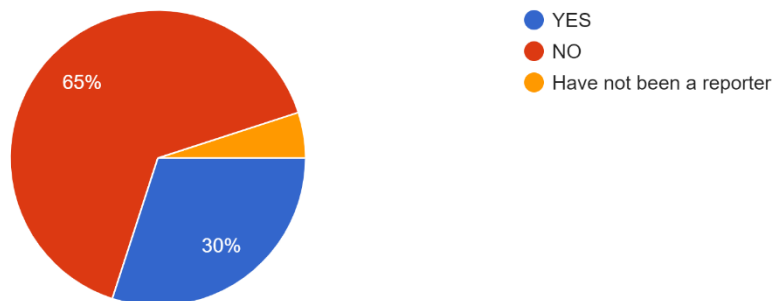
6. IS IT EASY FOR WOMEN JOURNALISTS TO COME BACK AFTER MATERNITY LEAVE?

20 responses



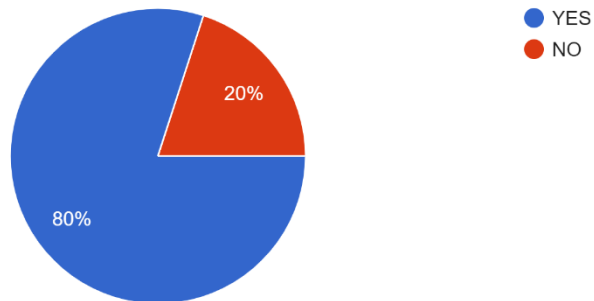
7. Have you ever been denied a reporting assignment that was given to a male colleague with similar experience?

20 responses



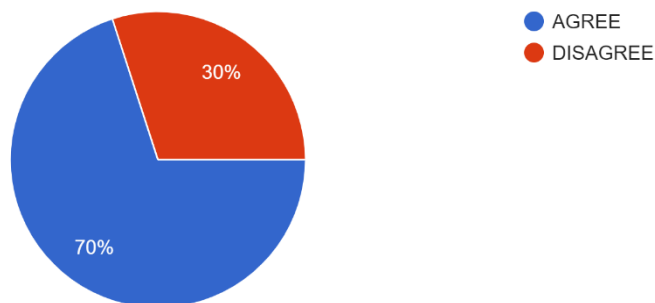
8. DO YOU THINK THE FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES OF A WOMAN AFFECT THE PROFESSIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS?

20 responses



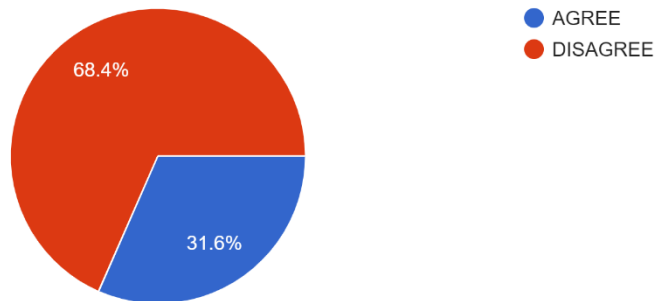
9. GENDER BASE TROLLING AND ABUSE IN MEDIA IS A POTENTIAL THREAT AND IS IT LEADING TO QUITTING OF JOBS?

20 responses



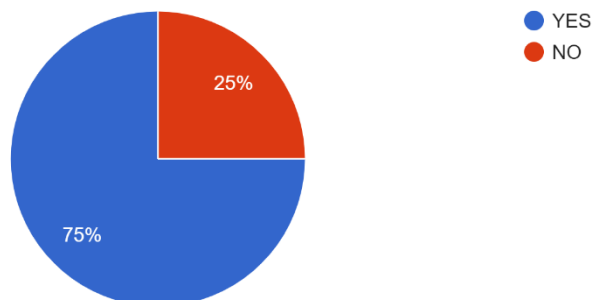
10. ARE MALE AND FEMALE JOURNALISTS ARE GETTING THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES AND WORKING CONDITIONS?

19 responses



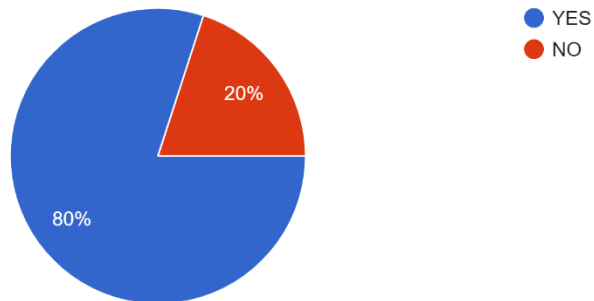
11. ARE YOU AWARE OF THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT POLICIES OF OF YOUR ORGANISATION?

20 responses



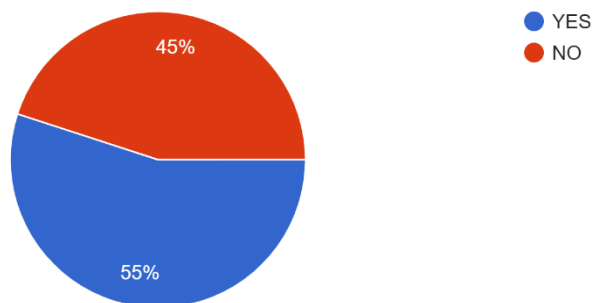
12. ARE YOU AWARE OF FORMAL APPEAL PROCEDURES OR MECHANISMS FOR HANDLING GRIEVANCES IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

20 responses



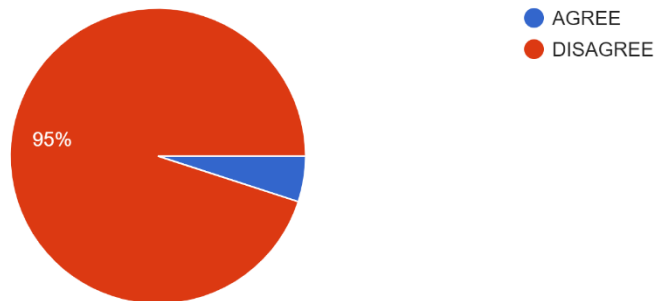
13. HAVE YOU EVER HELPED YOUR FEMALE COLLEAGUE DEAL WITH FORMAL APPEALS AND PROCEDURES OR MECHANISMS FOR HANDLING GR... SHE IS NOT AWARE OF THESE MECHANISMS.

20 responses



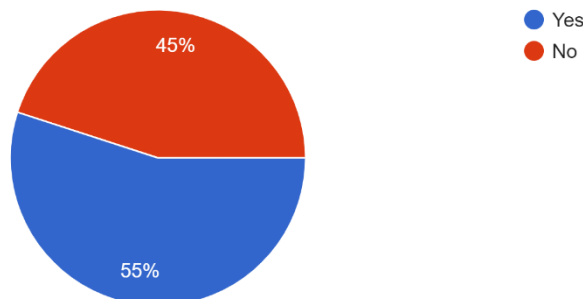
14. DO YOU AGREE WITH THE NOTION THAT JOURNALISM IS NOT GOOD FOR WOMEN FROM REPUTED FAMILIES?

20 responses



15. Do you think the media industry is progressing towards gender equality?

20 responses



1. In this paper, among 20 participants, 60 % have more than 10 years of experience in the media industry, and 40 % have less than 10 years of experience.
2. Among 20 respondents, 57.9% are from electronic, 31.6 % are from digital and 10.5% are from print media.
3. Among 20 respondents, 35% say more than 10 female journalists cover political and investigative assignments, whereas 55% say less than cover political and investigative stories; few switched to covering business and public relations.
4. According to 55%, say Yes, and 45% indicate No, that night shifts of women journalists show gender equality.
5. 85 % of 20 say Yes, they have seen female journalists facing gender bias, whereas 15% responded No.
6. 25% say Yes to the question, it is easy for women journalists to come back after maternity leave, while 75% of participants say No as a response.

7. 65% say No, while 30% say Yes, and among the 20 respondents, 1 respondent answered that she had not been a reporter.
8. Among 20 responses, 80% selected the option Yes, whereas 20% opted No, that the family responsibilities of women affect the professional role of women journalists.
9. 70% agree while 30% disagree with the statement that gender base trolling and abuse in media is a potential threat and leads to job quitting.
10. 31.6% agree, whereas 68.4% disagree that male and female journalists are getting the same opportunities and working conditions.
11. Among 20 women journalists, 75% say Yes while 25% say No, that they are aware of the equal employment policies of their organisation.
12. 80% say Yes, that they are aware of formal appeal procedures or mechanisms for handling grievances in their organisation, whereas 20% say NO.
13. Supporting question to mention the above question response. 55% say they helped their female colleague deal with formal appeals and procedures or mechanisms for handling grievances in their organisation, whereas 45% say No.
14. 1 respondent agrees with the notion that journalism is not good for women from reputed families, while 19 respondents, means 95%, disagree with such a notion.
15. On the point of weather, the Media industry is progressing towards gender equality among 20 respondents, 55% say Yes, and 45% say No.

These findings underscore the urgent need for structural reforms in media institutions to foster a safer, more equitable, and inclusive environment for women journalists in India.

Based on a minor survey for getting an idea of ground reality via Google Forms, leads basic interaction with 4 women journalists to know their points of view and personal experiences related topic.

Four female journalists of Delhi NCR are mentioned below:

Pragya Kaushik, ANI New Delhi

Rheema Parashar DD News, New Delhi

Sakal Bhatt DD India, New Delhi

Parul Singhal Inext, Meerut

When I asked the same question, four of them gave their opinion about the status of women journalists. According to Pragya Kaushik from ANI New Delhi, “Harassment has been the elephant in the newsroom that many would not speak about. Many would say that the majority of the time, attractive personalities when it comes to broadcasts and thus put extra pressure on good women reporters to focus on their looks rather than on stories. It is an ongoing battle that she believes will go on till we expect women to shoulder more responsibility with a low pay scale.



Parul Singhal from Inext, Meerut edition, believes that in the last 3 to 5 years, there has been a change towards women journalists, now they are handling investigative beats & assignments earlier, it was soft beats like cultural and soft stories.

Rheema Parashar, senior consultant & anchor, said the status and future are bright for women journalists, especially in electronic media. Women are choosing various fields of journalism now. If we compare the last 5 years numbers are increasing in the political field. Pragya Kaushik said there is an inherent bias against women that they cannot be effective journalists, as most of the politicians in influential positions are men, and the chances of these politicians hitting on women journalists if they get free with them, just like their male counterparts, remain a concern. However, that concern has been debunked by many women journalists on the political beat. Times are changing, and if organisations change their mindset, the ratio of political assignments would improve.

According to the Senior consulting editor, Sakal Bhatt women journalists in Delhi NCR are empowered and looked up to mostly. Major concern comes with a sense of safety and security, considering the volatile crime rate. It is impossible to cover an event alone post 11 pm unless you are with your crew, and even then, safety is not guaranteed. Also, women journalists in Delhi circles form a very significant, influential ecosystem, notwithstanding the position or side that they take. On the note of quitting the job, Ms Bhat stated that she feels it is a mix of all reasons. Family responsibilities by default come on a woman rather than more of a man gender base trolling is of any consequence much because it is an artificial and temporary social media-created perception which eventually dies a slow death. In a small town, it could be the case but in big metros, it cannot be a decisive factor in quitting the job. She suggested that a deeper understanding end of the critical role that women journalists play is very important.

- Conclusion

Through a mixed-method approach that integrated qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with quantitative data from a structured Google Form, this study investigated the status of women journalists in the Delhi NCR region. The study highlights the enduring structural and cultural obstacles that obstruct gender parity in Indian journalism, based on the responses of 20 female journalists from print, digital, and electronic media.

The results show that the media industry is still categorized as in its division of labor and institutional expectations, even though the number of women working in the field is growing, especially in the electronic and digital sectors. In contrast to political and investigative reporting, women are disproportionately assigned soft beats, which highlights a systemic bias consistent with previous scholarly findings (Joseph, 2005; Akhileshwari, 2014). Additionally, the widespread impact of family obligations, the difficulty of reintegrating after maternity leave, and the persistence of gender-based trolling all combine to create an environment at work that is both unsafe and exclusive for women.



A dichotomy is also revealed by the data: although most respondents are aware of grievance redressal procedures and equal employment policies, there is still insufficient implementation of these policies to provide real assistance and promote workplace equity. This variation raises the possibility of performative institutional measures that do not always challenge long-standing gender hierarchies. Furthermore, senior women journalists' real-life situations, as documented in qualitative interviews, emphasize the conflicting demands of personal safety and professional dedication, especially in high-risk or night assignments.

The majority of respondents rejected regressive socio-cultural norms that consider journalism inappropriate for women from reputable families, indicating an encouraging ongoing shift in perception. This shows that women in the media have an evolving professional culture, but the advancements are still not in tune across all media and regions.

In conclusion, the study indicates that although women's involvement in journalism is growing, male-dominated structures and societal expectations continue to limit it. In order to execute practical safety measures, fair role distribution, and gender-sensitive editorial policies, institutional reforms must go beyond policy discourse. In order to ensure that women journalists are not only included but also given the authority to lead in all areas of journalism, the findings urge a re-evaluation of newsroom cultures and media practices.

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¹ Neha Vats Kacker, PhD Scholar, Department of Continuing Education and Extension, University of Delhi.

² Dr. Devender Bhardwaj, Supervisor, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi.

³ Dr. Jai Prakash Dubey, Co-supervisor, Prof. Department of Continuing Education & Extension, University of Delhi.