



RESEARCH PAPER

Influence of Cultural Barriers, Societal Issues and Environmental Restriction on Career of Female Journalist: A Review of Feminist Economy of Female Journalists of Pakistan

¹ Farrah Zamir* ²Professor Dr. Shafiq Jullandhry

1. PhD Scholar, School of Media and Communication Studies, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Professor, School of Media and Communication Studies, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: June 12, 2021 Accepted: September 20, 2021 Online: September 23, 2021 Keywords: Challenges, Cultural Barriers, Environmental Restrictions, Female Career, Female Journalists, Feminist Economy, Pakistan, Social Issues	The current study has highlighted the impediments faced by women journalists, which are addressed and will aid in the creation of an inclusive and diverse media industry in a developing country like Pakistan. Although female journalists in Pakistan have shown excellent performance in journalism over the recent years, they are still facing challenges that are hindering them from doing their best. In the current study, the effect of cultural, societal and environmental barriers on the career of female journalists have been highlighted. The methodology chosen for the current study is secondary qualitative. The qualitative approach has been selected since it helps in analysing the behaviours, thoughts, and experiences of individuals in depth. This is secondary research as the data for the current study has been gathered from academic papers and newspapers. The current study concluded that women in the field of journalism are subjected to unjust treatment. The huge disparity between the pay of male and female journalists for similar roles have been discovered. Women are facing discrimination based on their gender at the workplace.
*Corresponding Author: Farazamir1989@hotmail.com	

Introduction

The research conducted by Ahmed (2019) demonstrated that journalists in Pakistan confront countrywide safety risks and impunity to criminal activities against journalists encourage the perpetrators to resume their criminal activities. Pakistan is a country that is recognised as the deadliest place for journalists in the entire world. According to the research conducted by Jamil (2019), Pakistan is among those developing nations that restrict the participation of women in some of the sectors that are purely considered for males and journalism is one such field where women face several problems and hindrances that make the survival of women nearly impossible in this field. There are still lesser women as compared to men in the profession of journalism as the profession of journalism is still an unsafe place especially for women in Pakistan (Adnan, Ali & Aslam, 2019). Given the current situation of the journalism profession in Pakistan, female journalists are not only susceptible to safety risks but also to gender-based segregation

when it is a matter of pay. Female journalists in Pakistan face gender-based challenges since journalism is not considered a women's field (Adnan, Ali & Aslam, 2019). As per Jamil (2020), although women in Pakistan are entering every walk of life; however, their new roles are not only unacceptable by society but also by men in their own field of journalism. It is also disappointing for women to pursue their career as a journalist in Pakistan since they are not treated with respect by their juniors and receive unequal pay as compared to their male counterparts (Adnan, Ali & Aslam, 2019). The current study will highlight issues purely faced by women journalists in Pakistan and the suggestions for making the working conditions and environment better for female journalists.

Literature Review

Media plays a vital role in shaping opinions and beliefs. Everyday people consume a lot of information through electronic media. Their minds are filled with information shared in different talk shows and news bulletins (Rasmussen, Romeijn & Toshkov, 2018). Public discourse is primarily determined by media and through that it creates an impact over the cultural, political, and economic priorities. It has also been involved in shaping gender roles. Even after a lot of progress in the media industry, the women somehow face a lot of issues due to the inequality and the male dominance in Pakistan. Media critiques governmental policies and strives hard to put their opinion forward (Shanahan et al, 2008). However, in such matters only male journalists are considered. Experts that are being called in talk shows are also mostly men. They do not let women take part in the argument as many fears that they will take their role. After all it is about professional jealousy and fear from being left out when newcomers get in the same field (Elajimi, 2018). There are many women who have qualified in the field political sciences, international relations, and international law but they still are not given importance when discussing the foreign policy issues. They are restricted to social issues particularly those related to human rights.

Apart from this the utmost problem that they face is from their home only because their character is even questioned when a woman chose to make journalism or media their field or career. They are questioned a number of times regarding their choice in career. Moreover, when they take a bold decision and try to pursue their career in journalism then they are not paid equal salaries. Low wage is also one of the significant issues that women face primarily in the developing countries like Pakistan (Awan & Hussain, 2007). Employers do not provide same salary as they are providing to a man in the same designation.

The taboos and restrictions that are imposed on females' journalists from the society's behaviour, and the inferior status of the women caused negative influences on the career of female journalists in Pakistan. The primary findings of this study are also found to be validated from most of the previous studies, in which the negative behaviour of male's journalists and cultural barriers are identified as the major factors that makes a negative impact on the career of female journalists in Pakistan.

The concept of feminism has been differently highlighted in the literature with an indication of different variables and factors. For example, Serazio (2019) defines feminism as a belief of political, economic, and social equality among the genders. This concept is supported by the studies of Jaquette (2018) who suggest that feminism is the deliverance of equality among the man and the woman in a society. Additionally, Johns (2018) denotes those rights of women have been under-rated by the male dominating culture of various

regions in the world, the concept of developing awareness regarding the equal rights of women in every society defines feminism. This concept has been initially established in the western regions but due to the strong positioning and persistence among the women of the world, it has spread across the globe (Bowd, 2018).

In contrast to all these, there are certain critics regarding the concept of feminism as this theory tend to oppose the nature rule and work against the nature. For example, Dow (2016) argued that the nature has defined certain roles to the individuals on the basis of their tendencies and capabilities; however, feminism tends to challenge these roles and appoint new roles. Similarly, Zuckerman (2017) criticised the equality agenda among the males and the females as the working capabilities of both genders are different. Hence their roles and responsibilities are also allotted as per their tendencies. Moreover, Keller, Mendes, and Ringrose (2018) claimed that the both the genders have their own unique characteristics for which they cannot alter the innate abilities. Therefore, the role and responsibilities among both the genders are shared as per their innate abilities. Altogether, the concept of feminism has received a bi-dimensional view in the literature on the basis of factors such as innate capabilities, biological tendencies and societal roles. This duality of the feminist theory acts as a critical fact that restricts the overall removal of career barriers for the women in developing regions such as Pakistan.

Next is the recent change in the journalism pattern of the media industry. Journalism is composed of explicit awareness regarding people and their related issues that are later exposed to the general public. However, Montgomery (2016) claims that the recent media has lost its quality and relevancy regarding the publication of any sort of information. Hence, the recent journalism is also reviewed in a diversified manner among both the journalists as well as the general public. The most common reason behind this dualism regarding the nature of journalism is the increase of competition in the field. In simple words, the traditional journalism has been planned to assist a wider exposure to real facts to the public whilst the current journalism acts as a race to flourish any sort of information with or without investigation. At such instable environment, the challenge of being employed is already crucial. For the female journalists specifically in the developing region such as Pakistan the challenge of working in unstable environment increases twofold.

With the passage of time and some sort of development in the region such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, etc. numerous changes have occurred in the work pattern of journalists (Jamil and Appiah-Adjei, 2019; Serazio, 2019). The most crucial and effectual change is imposed by the social media where instant update and easy reach to a wider audience has started to challenge the working conditions of the journalists. Under this, different studies have shed light on the contemporary challenges of female journalists. For example, Santos, Cerqueira, and Cabecinhas (2018) depicted the fact that occupational culture of journalism is indeed biased on the basis of gender. This is against linked the innate tendency of encountering the risks of being a public communicator (Slaughter et al., 2018). However, journalism after the concept of feminism has altered the occupational culture of the profession and demanded equality in terms of job roles, infringe benefits, and compensation among both the genders. In association to this, Caudwell et al. (2018) represented the mutual occupational ideology and philosophy of journalism regarding the new working trends such as news and digital media. However, critics claimed that this

philosophy limits the traditional assortment of culture of journalism practices, norms, and values. Hence, other studies have been carried out to define a better and mutual way.

Discussion

There are many women in media industry that started as journalist and are now renowned newscaster & media persons, speaks for the potential the industry has offered (Ali, and Kaur, 2015). But apart from the limelight it offers, it has been formidability difficult for female journalist to underpin an opportunity without facing backlashes from the society and industry. Under all these discussions, the challenge section of female journalism has remained as the most active topic of investigation. In association to this, different analysts have outlined different sorts of challenges that are encountered by female journalists throughout their professional career in journalism. In detail, a set of researchers highlighted exploitation of wages due to internal and external gender discrimination at the workplace (Keller et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2018). On the other hand, Gill and Toms (2019) denoted the challenge of appearance in journalism restrict many female journalists from continuing their professional journey. According to the study conducted by Safa, & Akter (2015), comparatively, the men are paid higher and there are many places where only men can acquire higher designation in this field. This is heart wrenching for women because despite of working so hard, they are paid accordance to their productivity. Such gender issues result in demotivating the women to participate in different works. The positions like executive and editorial are occupied by the men whether on merit or power basis (Raiten & Aimone, 2017). Still, women are possibly trying to compete them and explore more opportunities (Sakha & Shah, 2019). However, the challenge of accomplishing the managerial role during the professional life is quite challenging women specifically in the male dominating regions such as Pakistan.

Most common challenge that is indicated by another set of analysts is the cultural restrictions and the societal barriers (Orgeret, 2016; Mårtensson and Huberyc, 2017; Bareke, 2019). According to the report of Hunter and Di Bartolomeo (2019), every 2 out of 10 female journalists encounter cultural pressure and societal barrier at least ones in their professional journey. Another crucial challenge that is faced by the female journalists is the work and life balance that is challenged with everyday workload, security threats and even working hours.

Moving towards current and historical presentation of journalism, a voluntary and elective democracy had always been a part of this profession. The advent of the professional distinctiveness of journalists with entitlements to an exclusive character and status in the corporation also becomes some sort of challenge for the female journalists as well. For example, Rehmat (2017) denoted in their interview with female journalists with a number of 67% journalists reporting that they faced disobedience from their subordinates for being a female. One of the interviews was shared on the digital platform under which the respective respondent anonymously shared the fact that she had faced hard times when her juniors used to disobey and unwillingly overhear her commands. The only reason she reported was that they were not happy to work under a lady boss. From all these findings, some of the most common challenges are explicitly highlighted in the review so far. Practically, the fact that professional distinctiveness of journalists can be perceived on the basis of job-related philosophy, yet a female is still enforced to encounter some critical issues throughout their professional journey.

In response, conflict at working environment has been encountered by female journalists as highlighted in the literature. This has leads to violence cases against the working journalists in the field. For example, research conducted by Hovden and Knapskog (2015), the female journalists tend to work in conflict and fragile zones of safety and 73 percent of the participants agreed on the fact that they have faced threats of being bullied, violent actions and abusive attitudes of the people surrounding them. The extend of violence against female journalist has been denoted by major findings of Keller et al. (2018) that stated killing of three female journalist and bloggers who were killed for writing conspiracy stories in their blogs. From such reports and crucial findings, it is explicitly outlined that female journalists are explicitly under the risk of bullying threats as well abusive violence and life-threatening cases. Moreover, a survey conducted by dawn news indicated that 35 % of the female journalists who encountered harassment at workplace were enforced to remain silent and not report the incident (Sethna, Masood, and Jahangir, 2020). This discussion explicitly illustrates the societal barriers and environmental restriction that is imposed on the female journalists throughout their career journey. Rehmat, (2017) conducted a qualitative study and involved 50 female journalists in Pakistan to understand threats, rejection, and harassment in media industry of Pakistan. The study found that in general, the media industry in Pakistan shows little interest in perspective of women on issues they face. Hadi, (2018) can be used to justify the results in previous paragraph as the former asserted that in Pakistani society there are patriarchal values and beliefs that breed discrimination and sexual harassment against women at workplaces. According to Nusrat (2018) women have less than 5 percent share in the journalist's workforce in Pakistan and therefore there is a serious concern regarding whether the media in general is able to reflect and inform general public opinion and justification for the representation of women in this sector. The author also posited that women face threats of gender-based violence, negative societal attitudes, harassment, a significant gender pay gap, and stifled career progress which are the most important challenges along with others. These challenges discourage and deteriorate the resilience of a small but growing community of female journalists in Pakistan.

However, an alternative approach has been developed because of community participation of women empowerment and feminism theory in the development discourse. According to Bareke's (2019) finding the spiralling phase of poverty and failure of top-down approach gave rise to emergence of strengthening of local capacities with the help of women-centric development. Consequently, the women's empowerment gained reputation and popularity with the increase of feminism theory. Contrastingly, the term "empowerment" has been misunderstood by the recent community participation (Gill and Toms, 2019). This fact has been supported by Mårtensson and Huberyc (2017) with indication that implication and usage of women empowerment and equality at the workplace has become least ambitious than it was during its first appearance. Hence, this critical review regarding the women empower and equality represent a new dimension towards hinder of career-oriented women in the developing societies such as Pakistan.

Among such circumstances the most comprehensive solution is to evaluate the working condition on the basis of factors. In association, the study of Thorpe, Toffoletti and Bruce (2017) has been reviewed to denote the urban areas as the major variable in listing and addressing workplace challenges among female professionals. According to the authors, the female professionals indeed encounter workplace challenges in urban areas

but these challenges double up in rural and unprivileged areas of developing region. The most common reason as reported by the authors in their study is the acceptance of people and strong cultural force among the people of such under-developed societies. So, these challenges are to be accounted and addressed for giving rise to a better development capacity in the country.

Society in Pakistan pressurises women directly or indirectly to leave the profession of journalism because of the stigma attached to female journalists. The society in Pakistan is patriarchal and it is unacceptable for such a society to accept the voices of women raised over different issues. In Pakistani society, a woman must be confined to her home, looking after her home and raising children. The society in Pakistan does not praise opinionated women rather intellectual women are not accepted and the environment where the women journalists work is made hostile by their male colleagues. The society in Pakistan explicitly questions the character of female journalists for entering a sector that is male dominating. In recent years, more and more women have started working in journalism; however, their participation is neither appreciated by their families and society nor by their male colleagues at the workplace (Adnan, Ali and Aslam, 2019). Due to societal pressure, families are not happy with their women joining the profession of journalism. According to Ahmed (2019), female journalists are threatened more than their male colleagues for revealing the truth that is unwanted by some non-state actors as well as governments because females are vulnerable in the society of Pakistan. Female journalists in Pakistan are vulnerable as the society of Pakistan is filled with conservative people and gender discrimination.

Methodology

It's a review article. Qualitative approach has been used in this article. Review articles are basically based on secondary articles that are qualitative as well as quantitative. Therefor the use of a qualitative approach has been carried out in this review article.

Conclusion

It is evident from the above discussion that women are not even spared in the journalism field by the work environment and society of Pakistan. Patriarchal society in Pakistan is not accepting females in the profession of journalism. Unlike males, female journalists are subjected to abusive behaviour and discouraged at every step by society. Women journalists are subjected to gender pay disparity and negative behaviour by their subordinates that are not only hindering their professional growth but also their personal life.

Recommendations:

The researcher is of the belief that if the problems related to gender stereotypes and gender roles are addressed, it will provide the ignored female population of the country to contribute to the development of the nation and they will be able to prove their competency once equal platforms and opportunities are being given to them by the society. Therefore, this study is an attempt to identifying the social norms and perceptions that hold society back from understanding the value of female in the professional field. The recommendations for improving the situation of female journalists in Pakistan are:

Employers must ensure the safety of women journalists in the workplace.

Selection of different roles by the employers in the profession of journalism must be based on merit so that women can reach the position of executives and editorials if they fulfil the eligibility criteria.

It must be included in the code of ethics by employers that everyone irrespective of gender must be treated fairly and respectfully by their colleagues and supervisors. Everyone violating this code of conduct must be severely penalised.

Employers must implement an equal opportunity policy to ensure equal opportunities for everyone regardless of their gender. Women must be paid equally to men if their job role and responsibilities are like men.

Threats received by female journalists must be reported by them so that those guilty of charge can be penalised.

References

- Adnan, M. Ali, A. Aslam, S. (2019). Economic Issues and Ethical Journalism in Pakistan: Prospects and Challenges. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 4(1), 11-22.
- Ahmed, A. (2019). Journalism in Pakistan: *A Risky Profession*. *Academic Track Reader*, 144.
- Ali, M.Y. and Kaur, K.2015. Journalism 2.0: Journalist view about media information service trends in Karachi, Pakistan. *Chinese Librarianship: An International Electronic Journal*, 39, 40-51.
- Awan, M. S. & Hussain, Z. (2007). Returns to education and gender differentials in wages in Pakistan. *Lahore Journal of Economics*, vol. 12, issue 2, 49-68
- Bareke, C. (2019). Challenges of Journalist to Conduct Investigative Reporting: *The of Oromia Broadcasting Networks* (Doctoral dissertation, Addis Ababa University).
- Bowd, K. (2018). Keeping their distance? Navigating the complexities of journalist-public relationships in the social media age. *Australian Journalism Review*, 40(2), p.93.
- Caudwell, J. Mansfield, L. Watson, B. & Wheaton, B. (2018). Feminist praxis in sport, leisure and physical education. *In the Palgrave handbook of feminism and sport, leisure and physical education* (723-727). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Cooky, C. & Antunovic, D. (2018). The visibility of feminism in the Olympic Games: narratives of progress and narratives of failure in sports journalism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(5), 945-948.
- Dow, B. J. (2016). Authority, invention, and context in feminist rhetorical criticism. *Review of Communication*, 16(1), 60-76.
- Elajami, V. R. (2018). Gender's Role in Spanish-Language Journalism-An Examination of How Gender Plays in Hard Vs. Soft News.
- Gill, R. and Toms, K. (2019). Trending now: feminism, sexism, misogyny and postfeminism in British journalism. *Journalism, Gender and Power*, 97-112.
- Hadi, A. (2018). Workplace Sexual Harassment and its Underreporting in Pakistan. *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4(1), 148-153.
- Hunter, A. and Di Bartolomeo, J. (2019). "We're a movement": crowdfunding, journalism, and feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 19(2), 273-287.
- Jamil, S. & Appiah-Adjei, G. (2019). Journalism in the era of mobile technology: The changing pattern of news production and the thriving culture of fake news in Pakistan and Ghana. *World of Media. Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, (3), 42-64.
- Jamil, S. (2019). Culture of impunity and safety of journalists: Is safe journalism a distant dream in Pakistan? *World of Media. Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, (1), 51-66.

- Jaquette, J. (2018). *The women's movement in Latin America: participation and democracy*. Routledge.
- Johns Jr, D. (2018). *Drama, Low Wages, Fugitives, and Eviction: A Qualitative Analysis of the American Underclass as Presented in Books and Trash TV*.
- Keller, J.Mendes, K. and Ringrose, J. (2018). Speaking 'unspeakable things': Documenting digital feminist responses to rape culture. *Journal of gender studies*, 27(1), 22-36.
- Mårtensson, K. and Huberyc, A. (2017). "If it is our passion, we can do it": a qualitative study on female journalist students in Kerala.
- Montgomery, M.E.2016. *Displaying Women: Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York*. Routledge.
- Nusrat, R. (2018). The Challenges of Pakistan's Female Journalists. *The Diplomat*.
- Orgeret, K. (2016). Women making News. Conflict and Post-Conflict in the Field. In Kristin Skare Orgeret and William Tayeebwa (eds.) *Journalism in Conflict and Post-Conflict Conditions WORLDWIDE PERSPECTIVES* NORDICOM University of Gothenburg
- Raiten, D.J. & Aimone, A.M. (2017). The intersection of climate/environment, food, nutrition and health: crisis and opportunity. *Current opinion in biotechnology*, 44, 52-62.
- Rehmat, A. (2017). Life as a woman in Pakistani journalism; THREATS, HARASSMENT, and REJECTION. *A book of testimonies from women journalists in Pakistan about key professional hazards including safety, opportunities and acceptance*. <https://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Final-Report-Testimonies-Of-Women-Journalists-in-Pakistan.pdf>
- Rasmussen, A.Romeijn, J. & Toshkov, D. (2018). Dynamics of regulatory policymaking in Sweden: The role of media advocacy and public opinion. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 41(1), 49-74.
- Safa, M. N. & Akter, T. (2015). Challenges of female journalists in Bangladesh. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(5), 207-214
- Sakha, T. & Shah, N.A. (2019). Challenges Faced By Women In Journalism: An Analytical Case Study Of Situation In Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies*, 26(2).
- Santos, A.Cerqueira, C. & Cabecinhas, R. (2018). "Challenging it softly": a feminist inquiry into gender in the news media context. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1-17.
- Serazio, M. (2019). *The power of sports: Media and spectacle in American culture*. NYU Press.
- Sethna, R.Masood, T& Jahangir, R. (2020). Misogyny in the workplace: Hidden in plain sight. *Dawn.com*

- Shanahan, E. A. McBeth, M. K. Hathaway, P. L. & Arnell, R. J. (2008). Conduit or contributor? The role of media in policy change theory. *Policy Sciences*, 41(2), 115.
- Slaughter, A. Newman, E. Brummel, B.J. and Drevo, S. (2018). Journalist safety trainings: Effective for all? *Australian Journalism Review*, 40(2), p.53.
- Thorpe, H. Toffoletti, K. and Bruce, T. (2017). Sportswomen and social media: Bringing third-wave feminism, postfeminist, and neoliberal feminism into conversation. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 41(5), 359-383.
- Wiedlack, M.K. (2018). The Spectacle of Russian Feminism: Questioning Visibility and the Western Gaze. Subcultures, *Bodies and Spaces: Essays on Alternatively and Marginalization*, p.133.
- Zuckerman, S. (2017). Feminist Criticism of Genetic Counselling in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century. *In History of Human Genetics* (523-540). Springer, Cham.