

# Electronic Media as a Career for Working Women: Expectation vs Reality

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**Abstract**—*The purpose of this article is to understand the underneath reality of working in electronic media, especially for women who have other responsibilities too in their life. Women in Indian society cannot explore many choices as they have been taught to consider their family as their priority since their childhood. Though women are now breaking glass ceiling and going beyond their boundaries. It is a fact that people working in field of tv medium work under tremendous pressure as they are supposed to be good looking, active and fresh while appearing on screen. This imaginary outlook of the reporter, anchor developed by the viewers needs a lot of efforts to take. Especially women reporters and anchors have to strike balance between their hectic personal schedule and professional commitments. The paper also examines the feasibility for women working in various shifts in news channel medium and fulfilling domestic core. Maintaining balance between the domestic and profession is a tough task and sometimes women leave their full time media job for their family sake. Safety and security is also a major concern for this vulnerable gender as working in media is a 24/7 job where odd timing and venue can sometimes creates issues. A career in electronic media is considered to be glamorous but it is not as easy as it seems on screen, especially for women. There are a lot of factors which play important role in the way the career of a woman journalist progresses in electronic media industry such as their work profile, assignments and work life balance.*

**Keywords:** *Electronic Media, Glass Ceiling, Gender Bias, Working Women, Family Life.*

## Introduction

“Whatever efforts a woman makes to prove her ability and talent, the gender string is always attached with all her achievements.” A senior anchor cum Correspondent of a known news channel states the current situation of media industry of India. The mass media is the most appropriate visual medium where any transformation in the society can be seen and observed clearly. As TV medium is considered as the mirror image of the society, it gives an idea of progressive structure of a society, especially in case of gender equality. There was a time when woman was used as an object and product in electronic media, but currently women are taking charge in various roles here.

The format of electronic media has changed drastically in past few years. It is now more open for experiments, new talent and innovations. Post-liberalization, media has become more market-oriented and reflection of those changes can be seen on its working pattern and screen presentation. On the other hand media-market has expanded opportunities for women who were once used as part of product marketing. Increasing cut throat competition and commercialisation tv medium is now a challenging field to work.

Electronic medium was earlier considered as the field of men, as it involves more than the normal office hour to work. TV medium is a twenty-four hour job, a reporter may have to cover an event at midnight or sometimes the stay can be for longer period. With changes coming up in the societal structure of the country, more and more girls can be seen doing internship and professional courses of tv journalism. But the path of making career in this industry is not easy. The hectic life style and routine affects the individuals working in various capacities in media sector.

## Review of Literature

**O’ Brien Anne, 'Men own television': why women leave media work-(2014):** The globe is being connected through technology and communication. In such situation, the competition is getting tough by each day as news flow is very fast. In current case scenario, all media workers are facing many challenges, when they have to compromise with their family life. Especially working women in electronic media, face this problem very often as they have much responsibility on the personal front. Gendered views and approaches can affect the working culture. There are some main factors on which women workers may have to compromise with which lead the circumstances where women workers have to leave their jobs. The relationship amongst these factors plays such a crucial role, that create an unavoidable situation, where female media workers are forced to leave the media finally.

**Cabrera Elizabeth F, *Opting out and opting in: Understanding the complexities of women's career transitions*, (2007):** The study talks about the underline reasons due to which women are forced to leave their workplace. And if they again want to join, they prefer working conditions according to their suitability, not by their talent. In several media reports, it has been stated that many women leave their job as they cannot devote sufficient time to the office because they have to take care of their family and kids. It has also been noticed that much experienced women after having family, prefer to work from home rather than full time job.

**Hirsch Barry T, Macpherson David A, *Wages and Gender Composition: Why do Women's Jobs Pay Less?* (1995):** The study examined the occupational gender differentiation and their link with the wages during 1973-93. The wages depends on two major factors- qualification and gender. It was observed that the range of wages was much lesser in women occupations in comparison to male occupations. Gender factor affects the working pattern and wage models during that period. Within the factor of being a female the angle of skilled or not also played an important role.

**Thakkar Sagar, Nandan Saket, Bhardwaj Shefali, Jhangiani Swati Mittal Raghav, *Gender stereotypes and workplace bias* :** Research indicates that to come out on a conclusion on the basis of preconceived notion is not a logical thing. It affects somebody's persona and self-confidence. Behaving like a narrow minded person, stereotypes can be very painful for others, about whom the perception is being made. Stereotypes in work place can spark the idea of discrimination. Working women have to face many problems starting from fewer hikes in salary, lesser promotions and sexual harassment. Superficially, it does not seem to be present in the society, but actually the gender discrimination can be seen in various policy implementation in an organisation. This vanguard of gender inequality leads to wages discrimination, promotion biases, sexual harassment, pregnancy demotion etc. Key findings indicate that the gender gap has been reduced in last thirty years, but still a lot have to be done. As women have to handle family as well, most of the time they have to make a choice between career and family to get promotion, which they actually deserve. When they give priority to their family, take a break, they are not welcome in their organisation on a respected post as there is a break now in the service. Also, women doing hardcore male job in the field are also not entitled to draw salary and promotions like male workers. This disparity gives a scary picture of the society.

**SabilSurena, Marican Sabitha, *Working Hours, Work-family Conflict and Work-family Enrichment Among Professional Women: A Malaysian Case* (2011):** Striking a balance between the job and family is a real challenge. Families , where male, female both are working , it becomes more difficult to run a family within a social structure and network. Whereas work demands more time, family also

needs optimum time to cherish the moments. Long working hours and tough work culture impact the personal life and from there work –family conflict arises. To understand relationship between working hours and family, a study was carried out with 286 professionals in Malaysia. The outcome of the study revealed that working hours affects the family life only adversely. There is no positive relation between working hours and a healthy family life. As a middle way out, practice of work from home and family support in critical conditions have a positive and effective impact on the output of a working women.

**Desai Malavika, Majumdar Bishakha, Chakraborty Tanusree, Ghosh Kamalika, *The second shift: working women in India*, (2011):** Whether male or female, working life changes after marriage. So, for a working woman in India, family and office support is must to step forward. The motive of the research was to study the marital and office adjustments to lead a progressive life. 100 each working women, women working from home and homemakers were part of the study. Their lifestyle was measured on the parameters of health, self esteem, life satisfaction and job satisfaction. Results indicated that women who are working from home are least bothered and tension free. They were quite satisfy with their job profile as they got the opportunity to continue their work with their family. Their way of understanding problems and solving them was different from fro other two groups. Obviously, they have got flexible working hours and worker friendly policies. That is the reason, they were happy in their life. Working from homes, women got time for themselves like doing yoga and healthy exercises, which keep them healthy and then happy.

**Collins Rebecca L., *Content Analysis of Gender Roles in Media: Where Are We Now and Where Should We Go?* (2011):**The paper gives a fine impression through quantitative content analysis that women are poorly defined and described in the media, because of which the overall image of a woman has been damaged. While analyzing the data, two major factors come across behind underrepresentation of women. First, women are considered to be less capable in the society. Second, they are depicted in a negative and pessimistic way. They have to work in the supervision of others , they are always seen supporting others because they are seen with a sexual , feminine angle in the public forum with their facial expression, physique. They can be seen living mostly in traditional way. These images work as empirical proofs for their poor representation and non-exposure.

**Byerly Carolyn M and Ross Karen, *Women And Media A Critical Introduction*, (2006):** The study talks about the comparative analysis of the way women are working inside or outside mainstream media since 1970s. The findings of the interviews with media workers stated the insight of women workers. It explains the way women have maintained their perception to change their image by choosing a different reporting style. Working women have developed their own strategy to spread campaigns and thus have established

women owned media to transmit their message to the society. It also addressed key points before feminist media critiques and interventions, because they are dealing with production, consumer consumption and representation.

### **Working Women Journalist of India :**

The paper tries to understand reasons of the struggle for gender transformation and curbing the gap between the social identities of women and men. Till now, the image of woman has been considered as co- object or object to the viewers to attain TRPs ratings. Women's role in media and their decision making power clearly reflects in numbers of women working on senior positions. The changing electronic media has become market-oriented in the post-liberalization period which has changed the working structure of news channels.

Earlier studies conducted on the role of working woman journalist in our society have revealed that for long, it has remained largely dependent upon the societal norms and family structure. Women are still guided by social ethos. Her place has been closely associated with the home, family and kids. Though now women have developed a niche for them to explore the inner strength and interest, the primary responsibility attached with them is still their family, which most of them also consider.

Gender difference is the core issue which is still persistent in various forms. Starting from the initial level, women have to work extra to prove their capabilities. Other than the talent factor, the other factor is public dealing which is being seen more often. Many journalists, especially females, shares that only hard work does not give credit and fame in current situation, it is the behaviour, public relation and personal repo which count a lot. Terms and relations with the superiors and colleagues make an overall impression of a person in an organisation. Generally, women are considered as sincere and hard working in their approach by nature. As mostly females have to primarily fulfil their family duties along with the job, they stick to the work only and focus on their family time, whereas male can spend extra time in office jellifying with their superiors and bosses and bonding with them. This exercise cost them a lot. The image built for women journalists in any department is attached to their career aspirations and promotion.

### **Work Life Pressure**

Irrespective of the fact, modern way of thinking and support of technology has made life much easy for both working men and women, the genuine factor cannot be ignored that male and female are biologically different. Similarly their physical and mental strength varies. As per the societal rulebook, even when woman is coming home after a nine or ten hour long shift, she is supposed to cook food for the family and do other domestic stuff. Whereas male member can directly go to bedroom, take rest and go to sleep on time.

Indian society has gone through a lot of changes resulting male partners are trying their level best to share the family responsibilities with their female partners. Working women appreciate this positive change and give the credit of their career success to their husbands, but the numbers of such cases are not much significant. Indian society is still very much intrigued in the threads of traditional way of thinking where women are supposed to be handling domestic stuff. To break this ceiling was not an easy task. Cases have been found where even when the husband is supportive in nature, other family members do not behave in same way. Thus a working woman keeps on struggling striking a balance between house hold and office responsibilities.

### **Objectives of the study**

- 1) To explore the real life challenges which working women have to face in offices.
- 2) To understand the difference between the expectation and the reality for working women.

### **Hypothesis**

There is a common perception that women journalists get easy access to make career in electronic journalism.

Working women journalists find it difficult to handle family life with professional responsibilities.

### **Research Methodology**

1. Coverage of the study: This research paper is exploratory in nature and examines the mind-set of the society.
2. Sources of Data: The Data and content for the research paper were gathered from secondary published sources including books, newspapers, Journals, websites and research studies.

### **Content Analysis**

The field of electronic media is itself loaded with a very hectic life schedule. The untimely news events and coverage assignments make a media journalist more complicated. Talking about the female fraternity in the medium, it is a tight rope to walk on. Working in newsroom or in field, it is a daily struggle for the women especially when they are beginners. Young girls or women outside the field, assumes the process of becoming an anchor or reporter a very easy process, until they start digging for the opportunities. Being a very small world, there is cut competition in tv News channels and considering the increasing use of technology, man power hiring is a very target oriented.

Organisations now want multi-tasking professionals who can work on various assignments at the same time. When an aspiring journalist enters in to the field, he or she has to prove themselves on various grounds. One of the crucial factors here is time. Urgency of the news coverage demands more time from a reporter here. Once they enter into the field, the time can go

beyond a particular shift of the correspondent or a media professional working in any department.

While talking about the extra time and work for the organisations, gender difference comes in the picture. As mostly working women are either married or have family, they have other responsibilities too to fulfil. A female journalists working in any department, leave office after her duty hours, which sometimes does not taken positively. Male fraternity of the organisations depicts it as unprofessional as women do not stay back in the offices. This creates negative image of working women. While the women work on simple logic, doing their work with dedication during their shift and leave the office on time because they have other works to do at home. Whereas male members usually do not have this responsibility. They can stay for extra hours for professional commitment or sometimes to establish better relationship with the management.

Usually women working in newsroom or office duties face the flak of being incompetent or lack of feeling of taking initiatives. Though many times the truth is unnoticed. Women come, do their work and leave office on time. It is the primary responsibility of the organisation to acknowledge the devotion of every employee of the channel who works with dedication. Spending extra time cannot be considered as parameter of hard work. Many women feel that their male colleagues try to suppress them professionally by constantly fault finding or criticising their performance. With time, though young generation is working on the same path. Girls are also giving extra time and work according to the need of the office, provided they manages other things too. But this atmosphere creates pressure on the women who cannot afford to spend extra time or do outstation jobs or night shifts. This is where they have to choose between their family and job, where most of the women opts family as their primary responsibility.

Issue of gender difference in any term should be addressed in media field itself; because many noticed or mostly unnoticed events do happen in this field which are gender centric. Women should also be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and fair opportunity of using their rights in the field. This will strengthen their ability to combat negative portrayals of women and to challenge instances of abuse of the power of an increasingly important industry. Self-regulatory mechanisms are said to be working in the media but they also need to be strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-based atmosphere. Women need to be involved in decision-making process regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and their impact.

A second perspective which was found in various studies and personal experiences is the clash between the expectation and reality. Watching famous anchors or correspondents on television screen motivates most of the aspiring journalists and attracts them to enter in to the glam world. But working practically in various capacities for live events entirely

changes their life. Compromising personal life and family for the professional commitments cannot be worked out for long. That is where the mirror of glamour image breaks down and journalists realises it is not that easy to survive in the tv medium as it looks.

### **Hypotheses**

**There is a common perception that women journalists get easy access to make career in electronic journalism.**

Witnessing the large amount of pressure and increasing role of technology in the tv medium, role of a journalist becomes multitasking. Organisations want employees with various qualities and hand on experience with every task requires in the field. Also with the sharp competition amongst the news channels, hours of working are limitless. Therefore it is not easy to for women to get enter in the electronic medium as they have to be sure about taking this as a challenge. Reason being, they have to fulfil their dreams and take care of their family and kids as well.

**Working women journalists find it difficult to handle family life with professional responsibilities.**

As the news medium is based on untimely working pattern, it requires extra time and efforts from the professionals working here. Male professionals can be seen more in the number because of the simple facts that they have limited role in family front where as women have to fulfil double responsibility as whatever position she attains in the industry, she cannot ignore her family and kids. With senior position or sometimes to get the aspired position in the organisation, an individual needs to devote more time and compromise with her or his personal space. For man, it is alright, as women is there at home to take care of his family, but for working women, sometimes it a crucial time as they have to choose any one of these. As family is always considered as the primary responsibility of a woman, it is she who has to sacrifice her career aspiration for family sake.

### **Conclusion**

Several researches are based on the key factors as why it happens that women, who decide to take journalism as career, later decide to leave full time newsroom jobs? It is the gap between expectation and reality in the electronic media field, which is realised when an individual steps in the field. To witness the large number of female professionals in electronic media field, mind set of society needs to be changed. Family should not only be considered as the primary responsibility of woman. Family members' role is also crucial in the situation.

The issue of the gender difference requires debate all over the world and simultaneously status of women in Indian society has been a matter of intense scrutiny. They have lived as isolated entities for centuries, largely suppressed by the male-dominated society around them. This seclusion is responsible for slow entry of women in the career which they aspire to

enter. The status of Indian women has undergone a wide range of changes with more and more women entering in this so called glamorous field. The amount of struggle in and outside the house has made them strong and more practical in various occupations. But the question of gender inequality is still the main concern. If this problem has been tackled socially and psychologically, more women can fulfil their dreams and the rate of leaving the career for women might also come down.

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