

“Gender Disparity in an Era of Globalization”

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Abstract—“Gender has always been a distinctive factor in a society. And media is not unlike from it. Gender and media have together remained a topic of dialogue, primarily in the projection and the status of women in media”.

We live in a world of ‘mediatized realities’. As both customers and creators of media gist, the way we have a tendency to absorb socio-political realities is being more and more influenced by media dynamics. In an era dominated by globalisation and media proliferation, it is difficult to overlook media’s impact on gender dynamics, especially in the context of gender in journalism. A women journalist is at times discriminated, exploited and proved wrong at each potential circumstance. Her subsistence has been abridged to a continuous battle for survival.

There are series of issues that plague women, therefore the objective of my research paper is to look at the problems/factors and issues confronting women operating within the media, especially print media, to gauge the extent of direct and indirect discrimination at the workplace in terms of pay, promotions, amenities, benefits, areas of work allotted to them and sexual harassment at work with special relation to the Sexual Harassment Act (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal), 2013.

Multiple factors would be enumerated through this paper that influence a women journalist. Then the paper would endeavor to highlight the changes that women want at their work place. This would be followed by a number of the measures and techniques to reinforce the competence of media to undertake gender-based disparities within the media and in society, as well as to empower women each as professionals and as citizens. Finally, an attempt will be made to ponder on the legal recourse regarding Sexual harassment at the workplace as well as redressal of the same in the light of The Supreme Court ruling of 1977, commonly referred to as the Vishakha Guidelines and the landmark Sexual Harassment Act of 2013.

Methodology: The research paper will be analytical in nature and the data for this study has been collected from the secondary sources, which includes books, magazines, journals, periodicals and different websites.

Research Limitations/Implications: Theoretical Research

Practical Implication: To eradicate the Conscious and unconscious biases and thus helping India to move towards its goal of being an equal, holistic workplace for members of all genders.

Originality: To change the mind-sets of the society as a whole and individuals in particular.

Keywords: Media, Gender-disparity, Job Insecurity, Sexual Harassment Act.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a country like India, where Girls and women constitute almost half of the population are denied of access to resources and opportunities in contrast to their male counterpart, due to their gender. Almost every Indian would agree that of all the women they knew, most were a victim of discrimination in their everyday life. Thus, Gender disparity is a global concern and it does not receive the kind of attention it deserves. And the gender disparity at the work place is no exception.

Profession of Journalism in India was a male bastion in the 1940s and the 1950s, with the exception of a few women in newspaper offices, who usually wrote editorial or worked on weekend magazine but were almost never sent on coverage assignments by their male chiefs. Women were not taken seriously in journalism. Men thought that hard-core, beat reporting were their preserve.

The first woman to break the convention and make a mark in Indian journalism was the legendary photojournalist Homai Vyarawalla, who died at 98 in January 2013. Who began her career in the 1930s, covered major political events, personalities, even photographed some events in World War II and also received the Padma Vibhushan, India’s second-highest civilian award. Prabha Dutt, (mother of the famous NDTV journalist Barkha Dutt) who died in 1984, was the first female journalist to cover war in India. Usha Rai, who started her career in 1961 as a trainee reporter with The Indian Express in Mumbai, and went on to become a pioneer of development journalism in India. Mrinal Pande, who shattered the glass ceiling by becoming the editor-in-chief of Dainik Hindustan - a multi-edition Hindi newspaper. Nalini Singh, Barkha Dutt and many more who proved themselves in this male chauvinist industry but still there are major gender disparity at the work place which influences women namely: job insecurity; contract system of employment; neglect of maternity and child-care provisions, salary, promotions, transport facilities, participation, division of labour and sexual harassment.

The following section would examine the multiple factors influencing the women journalist and identifies the key issues for each factor.

2. WOMEN JOURNALIST AND INFLUENCING FACTOR

As the environment influences everyone, so are the women journalist influenced by their surrounding environment. There are multiple factors that influence women journalist like:

2.1. Family and Society

A woman is a foundation of society. She gives birth to a new generation. A woman journalist takes responsibility of her family and job and faces a lot of difficulties at both the fronts. At the family front she has to make her marriage and marital/domestic responsibility as wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Due to which many times the brilliant and most successful journalists have to left a bright career to settle down in matrimony or have moved to less demanding jobs when children arrived. For women, almost invariably, the home comes first. Quite a few women especially in the English language press have put off having children in favour of their careers. Most women who took a off to bring up children or even those who stayed home for a few months to have children believed that they would lost out on growth and promotions. Some women even lose their jobs as maternity leave is not available to them or when they returned from their maternity leave they were demoted. Childcare facilities and maternity leave are still not a right in most media organizations. This disparity forces brilliant women into less paying, less prestigious and often less exciting jobs. But they can be “successful” when supported by cooperative husbands/mothers-in-law/ parents who help them out when office pressures increased. Sadly, "Women's productive years are also their reproductive years."

2.2. Accommodation

With the progressive change in the socio-economic framework of the country more and more women are leaving their homes in search of employment in big cities as well as urban and rural industrial clusters. Women, hailing from different parts of the country, have to first encounter a major challenge of finding a suitable and an affordable place to stay.

2.3. Salary

Women working in the English language press are better placed in terms of salaries and other perks as compared to the regional language press but with the contract system becoming a norm now for new recruits, women seem to be getting short-changed. They are not clear about the implications of the contract system nor know how to negotiate. They have no idea of the benefits they can get or perks they should demand. They forced to accept what is given and end up getting less than their male contemporaries who are subordinate to them. They do not get normal benefits like leave, reimbursements, Provident Fund and so on.

2.4. Promotion

Promotions are rare in both the English language and the regional press and no newspaper organization has any transparent system of assessing performance. The result is that promotions are arbitrary and capricious, giving rise to frustration. Thus, women journalists across the country are rarely promoted; some go without a promotion for decades. Where women have been promoted, they have faced trouble and rebellion from male colleagues. In organizations where women are in good numbers they say there is equal opportunity in writing and reporting assignments but not in promotions.

2.5. Participation

The convergence of new media technologies and influx of private media organizations in the last decade has increased the number of women working in print media. However, women have not gained equality with men in terms of participation and decision-making. Top management is still entirely male dominated and patriarchal with only a negligible number of women holding senior positions. The presence of women is also absent in any official commissions, boards or committees formed for formulating policies or monitoring the media. Access to this new medium is particularly tough for women in poorer and less developed areas where telecommunications infrastructure is meager and too expensive. Lack of skills, training and language accessibility also serves as major deterrents.

2.6. Division of Labour

Earlier it was almost impossible to find a woman reporting on politics and economy now few young women have emerged who are reporting on such issues. However, the gender division of labour is still very much evident in the way coverage of stories is assigned in most media organizations. Women still tend to be assigned to "soft news" such as ethos, art, and lifestyle while men are assigned to political and economic stories, which are considered more as "real issues." The gender division of labour is highly pronounced in production, creative and technical departments, which are male dominated.

2.7. Transport Facility

The maximum problems that women journalists face are due to the transportation and communication to their offices. The organizations in which those female journalists work also do not provide adequate facility to commute. After Nirbhaya case in Delhi, Delhi was declared, ‘The capital of crime against women’ by the media. Such incidents have adversely affected the prospect of women joining journalism. Most of the journalists accepted that they are scared of commuting alone at night and some highlighted their experiences, which are seldom discussed in newsrooms because reporters run the risk of losing an assignment if they come across as weaklings.

Further, there is an extensively divide between the English and regional language press regarding all the factors said above, that a women journalists working for dailies in English get a better deal. This differential treatment is apparent even when the same management brings out both the English and local language daily. However, something that is epidemic in both the regional language and English press is sexual harassment, which can be seen as another and most important form of gender disparity at the work place.

2.8. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment at the workplace is not only a gross violation of women's right to a safe and supportive work environment but also, more fundamentally, of their basic right to livelihood. Sexual exploitation of women has existed for ages and cuts across societies, rich and poor. It is only in latest scenario that the society has started looking at sexual harassment at the workplace honestly and setting laws in place that seek to provide a safer/holistic work environment for women.

Case Study on Sexual Harassment: Media Intern and Tarun Tejpal

On 20th November 2013, *Tehelka* magazine well-versed its staff that Tejpal was giving a resignation as editor for six months, after a woman colleague alleged that he had sexually assaulted her twice in a hotel elevator during a conference. This received intense public attention and media scrutiny especially because Tejpal and his magazine had been involved in highlighting the issues of sexual violence in India. Police in the state of Goa, where the incident took place, have filed a First Information Report (FIR), which lists charges, including rape, against him. The Goa Police issued a non-bailable warrant against him. Goa police arrested him on 30 November 2013. On 1st July 2014, Supreme Court granted him bail and asked him to submit his passport to the court.

This famous case had triggered a media debate about silence over the harassment of women at their work places. India's workingwomen often face sexual harassment from their male colleagues, officers, yet few report these cases, since they are afraid of losing their jobs or facing persecution simply for speaking out. The issue of sexual harassment requires institutional attention and also enforcement of the Vishakha Guidelines by a regulatory body. But before anything else, women in the media need to unconditionally identify, condemn and take action against all forms and incidences of sexual harassment. It is indeed ironic that those who report on such issues in society actually suffer it in their own workplaces.

3. LEGAL RECOURSE REGARDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE

It was for the first time in 1997, that the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Vishaka's Case acknowledged sexual

harassment at workplace and laid down some guidelines called as Vishaka's Guidelines and made it obligatory for the employers to comply the same and prevent the commission of any act of sexual harassment at workplace. The Guidelines issued was taken as a 'Law' as declared by the Apex Court of India. Though it was mandatory for all the employers to follow the guidelines but later it was observed by various courts that the guidelines were not strictly implemented in many of the organization.

The increasing rate of women participation in workplaces made it necessary for the Legislature to enact an Act focusing on prevention of Sexual Harassment at workplace as well as redressal to the same. The Act is named as, **The Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.**

The Sexual Harassment Act (Hereby called as an 'Act') was finally enacted on 9th December 2013 for the prevention of sexual harassment against women at workplace in the whole of India. The main objective of the Act was protection of Women, prevention and redressal of sexual harassment complaints. Sexual harassment has been termed as a violation of basic Fundamental Rights of women under Article 14, Article 15(3), Article 21 and Article 19(1) (g) of the Constitution of India.

4. CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

The CAT Bench comprising of Judges K B Suresh and P K Pradhan had questioned certain provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 and said that Section 4 and 7 of the Act can be termed as unconstitutional. **Section 4** of the said Act makes it obligatory for the Internal Complaints Committee to have at least two members "committed to the cause of women." **Section 7** says that the Local Committee should be chaired among the "eminent women from the field of social work and committed to the cause of women". Further in this regard, the Tribunal said, "If members of the committee of the adjudicatory committee are to be committed to an ideology, their mental frame will be such that it would give an opportunity for unwelcomed bias and their finding also will be in resonance of their personal commitment."

Though the Act, which had come into power in 2013 with the objective of protecting the rights of women, certain provisions of the act that seems to be biased and violates the principles of natural justice need to be amended at the earliest.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, the situation of women in journalism requires attention and action from a number of sides. Much is happening but much remains to be done, so the following are some of the recommendations /solutions:

Among the issues that may bear consideration by those who run media organizations are:

- The term "work" should be redefined with the concept of equality forming the bedrock on which organizations are created.
- The desirability of stated policies and transparent procedures with regard to recruitment, remuneration, promotion, work assignment, and other matters that affect professional access, employment and advancement, in keeping with essential principles of gender justice and equity.
- The need to institute measures and mechanisms to counter or minimize the effect of negative gender-based attitudes and behaviors within media organizations, including implementation of the directives of the Supreme Court of India with regard to sexual harassment in the workplace.
- The possibility of systemic and structural adjustments in work schedules, not as a special concession to women, but in recognition of the need for all human beings to achieve a healthy balance between professional and personal life which would, in turn, enhance both productivity and creativity.
- The practicability of institutional support to women – beyond the mandatory maternity leave – during particular periods in their lives when it would make a crucial difference to their ability to cope with the often conflicting demands of work and family.

6. CONCLUSION

Thus we can conclude that “Gender Parity is not just a women’s issue, it is an issue for the world wide nation. Before empowerment of women can be achieved it is essential to enable women to give right to be heard of their experiences, their sufferings, and for society to understand them as human beings and respond to them with sensitivity.

In this context, media has an important role to play, to create stirring in women to achieve their potential as the prime movers of change in society. In today’s world, print and electronic media plays a crucial role in effectively spreading messages that needs to be conveyed. Therefore, I urge the media to take a serious look on the issue and do self-regulation and self-monitoring with extreme care and caution. Such kinds

of initiative are required in every nook and corner of our country, so as to empower the women at grass root level.

It is believed that within every man there is a woman and within every woman there is a man. So where is the distinction between the man and the woman?

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