

# **"THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS: A STUDY ON MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS IN ODISHA"**

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## **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Summaries of Findings of the Study**

Women are central to the social, political and economic aspirations of the country as they constitute the numerical other half of society. They have been playing a major role by making critical contributions in the each and every field. So here in this research study, journalism profession is considered for the study. Women in journalism have been taken as subjects of study for this research. Women substantially outnumber men in journalism training and enter the profession in greater numbers, but till today relatively few are rising to senior jobs and the pay gap between male and female journalists remains a stubbornly wide one (Frank, 2013).<sup>1</sup>

In this study, an attempt is also made to know the number of women journalists working in Odisha in various media houses. The researcher has also tried to know the type of professional status that women journalists in Odisha are enjoying. This study has also made attempt to know the kind of discrimination women journalists are facing in their respective work environment. This chapter discusses summaries of the major findings, conclusion and recommendations of the present study.

The results of the study strongly suggest that a significant proportion of the women journalists have been discriminated against beat assignments, promotions and newsroom culture. They know that gender discrimination is a problem. More than half of the women journalists in this study reported that gender discrimination has been a problem they are experiencing personally as well as professionally. The findings of the research reveal that the media is another platform of gender discrimination.

#### **6.1.1 Number Game:**

An important finding of the research study is that, women journalists in Odisha are far more visible, especially in broadcast media, but they are yet to break the glass ceiling across the board. Around 225 women journalists are working in various positions in nine Odia news

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Suzanne, Women and Journalism, 2013, pg. 34-55

channels. Over two years of survey from 2016 to 2018, the total number of women journalists rose from 545 to 619.

One of the more interesting findings of this study showed that majority of women prefer to work in cities than on district headquarters or small towns. Maximum numbers of women journalists were concentrated in various media houses in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. This may be attributed to several reasons. Almost all news channels are headquartered at Bhubaneswar. Nine news portals covered in this study are also based out of Bhubaneswar. Majority of the dailies are also based out of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Bhubaneswar is the capital of Odisha and most of government offices and political stories are happening here. Therefore, media outlets have set up their offices here. Some of the old media outlets are based in Cuttack. With the increase in the lifestyle of common man, they are shifting from the rural areas to urban areas and cities. Employment opportunities are more in urban areas and so also the higher pay packages. These factors have contributed to the skewed distribution of women journalists in the twin city.

Maximum numbers of women journalists in Odisha are in the age group of 20-30 years. As per the study, 58% of the women are in this age group, while 30 women are in the age group of 30-40 years and only 12 women journalists are in the group of 40 years and above. Whatever trend we are witnessing in other parts of the world is also found here. Odisha is no exception in it. It is a mere reflection of the attitude of a society that portrays women as perfect as a house wife and a mother. It is not the problem of the media rather it is found in all other professions around the world. Media industry had remained as a male dominated one. But when women started to join the industry, males are not ready to accept them as their co-worker.

### **6.1.2 Gender Inequalities**

The industry has recognized women as a separate component within the profession, with different challenges to face simply because they are women in a traditionally gender-segregated field. A number of structural and social barriers to women journalists' career paths have been identified. Some very brave admissions have already made about inequities within the system. The respondents are aware of woman's issues within the newsroom.

Women are facing gender inequalities in the news room as far as beat assignments are concerned. Not a single woman has been found in the sports beat. Majority of the respondents (19) are covering soft beats like art, culture, local events, weather, lifestyle etc. There is still a glass ceiling in the area of sports journalism which women have not yet broken. In the present research study, 58% of the respondents have agreed that gender discrimination found in media organisations in Odisha.

89% of the respondents in this study have the perception that they are not getting timely promotion. 52% of the women journalists also have the perception that their opinions are never asked or taken into consideration in the news room either by their male colleagues or by their reporting authority. Another finding of this study reveals that 58% of the women believed that their male colleagues dominate them in the news room. By analysing these data, we can definitely say that gender discrimination is there in the newsroom of various media organisations in Odisha. There is a relationship exists in between job satisfaction and continuity of job as discussed in various literatures. Job satisfaction is crucial for discharging duties with responsibility regardless of employment. Journalism is a creative job in which a person can render meaningful and purposeful service if the work environment is conducive for her discharging the functions effectively (Murthy, Anita, 2009).<sup>2</sup>

Not a single respondent has reported on the sexual harassment they have faced on their workplace or while out on their assignments. That adds a positive side to this study. Another important finding of this study is that a substantial proportion of women are aware about the presence of sexual harassment cell. The research has identified a number of structural and social barriers for women journalists in their career. It is also found that women journalists are recognised as a separate constituent within the profession. Despite some positive changes in the last couple of years, a lot of combine efforts have to be taken care of to break the glass ceiling created inside the newsroom.

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<sup>2</sup> Murthy D. V. R, Anita G., Working Media Women, Profile, Work Environment and Job Satisfaction, 2009, pg.94-96

### **6.1.3 Security: A Major Concern**

Security is a major concern for women in the present time. Whether you are staying at home or working outside you have to look for your security. Especially working women have to look for their safety and security when they are going out of home. Alarming cases of physical and digital threats are found across the globe. The media women are too facing a range of physical and digital threats. These threats are standing against their freedom of expression.

The present study reveals a startling fact that near about 72% of women fear for their physical security in the media industry in Odisha. Whatever segment of the media they are working, the news room women are experiencing various categories of threats like abuse of power and authority, insults, public humiliation, damage of reputation and others.

### **6.1.4 Covering Hard News: A Distant Dream**

Majority of the women reporters have shown their resentment for being assigned a general assignment reporter or not having a particular beat to cover or are covering local events, lifestyle, art, culture, weather etc. In this study, it is also found that, out of 28 women reporters surveyed, almost 19 reporters are covering soft beats. They are given soft stories to write and soft beat to cover for television. Negligible numbers of women journalists are covering politics, crime or any hard beat. The present study finding reveals that only four women cover politics, two cover crime and one each covers finance and economic beats. Therefore, women here in Odisha dominate lifestyle reporting rather than crime and politics. Covering sports is a distant dream for women in Odisha.

### **6.1.5 Few Women at the Top**

Majority of the women working in the news media are found at the entry level. Women journalists in the senior level or at the top positions are few. From the survey report, it is found that only four to five women are holding different senior level positions in the media houses. They are working in the designation of Input Editors, Senior Editor and Bureau Chief. From our questionnaire survey, it is found that majority of the journalists are in the age group of 20 to 30

year's. An important reason for this may be attributed to the discontinuity of the profession. After analysing the media owners' interviews, it is found that majority of the women leave the profession early due to marriage and low salary which is very difficult for them to remain in the profession.

### **6.1.6 Radio Broadcasting: Not a Lucrative Field**

Though radio is considered to be a traditional media outlet but it has not been able to attract many women journalists. It has made its presence quite before television entered Odisha. All India Radio, Cuttack has started its operation in 1948. But it was only in early 2000, private players entered the radio broadcasting segment. Private FM stations are the major employers in hiring women journalists. The present research study findings depict that only 24 women journalists are working in various radio stations across Odisha. This media outlet has to wait for long in order to have a greater number of woman journalists.

### **6.1.7 Digital Platform: A New Opportunity**

Odisha is not lagging behind other states as far as digital media is concerned. The growth of news websites is creating whirlwind especially for the women journalists. Not only freshers but some experienced women journalists are turning their eyes into this platform. The present research study has also found the same trend. Around 48 women journalists are working in nine news portals only in Bhubaneswar. It is heard that more news portals are coming up in both English and Odia. Some of the senior journalists, owners and editors with whom the researcher had discussions, were of the opinion that they are planning to launch news portals in either English or Odia in the coming days. This shows that this is another segment where women can work with the comfort of job timings. These news websites are working mainly on a 9am -6pm schedule.

### **6.1.8 Management Perspective**

To get the management perspective of the present study, few media owners and editors were interviewed by the researcher. The following findings were analyzed from their interviews.

Media owners should provide equal opportunities to remove the inequalities. Though most of the owners interviewed were interested to hire women in their respective organisations. While interviewing media owners for the research study, it was found that they are more concern about the security of their women employees. But this concern is only limited to providing transport facilities. They are providing pick and drop facilities for the women journalists who are working on late nights. Except this, the researcher had not found any steps these owners are taking for their women journalists. Majithia Commission had recommended that female journalists should not work in odd hours but if in any case they work for odd hours then proper pick and drop facilities should be provided to female journalists. So, the commission's recommendations are properly followed here in Odisha. Most of the media owners emphasised on one factor i.e. marriage. After marriage most of the women are leaving the job due to family pressure. Most of editors interviewed in this study are not hesitant to hire women journalists. But they are of the view that young girls do not continue long in the profession.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

There is a general agreement within the profession that more women are now coming into journalism profession than men. This could bring a difference to the society. It is recognized that women have contributed significantly to broadening the base of journalism in Odisha. The experience and perspective of women journalists in different sections of the media at different positions are different. There is a considerable convergence of opinion that women journalists in this profession face obstacles on account of gender.

It is found that most of the media organisations in Odisha are bypassing the wage board by hiring journalists on contracts. Contracts means higher salaries than those recommended by the wage board but these media organisations are just exploiting the women journalists through negotiations. Some of the media women pointed out that women cannot talk about money and increments the way that their male counter parts can. Women's perceptions towards discrimination are reflected in their responses to questions about pay, promotion, assignments and training at their respective organizations. A majority of women journalists in Odisha are

working in the category of fixed term contract. And the next number in this area is the trainees. No women journalists are found in the category of permanent employment.

Findings of this study fulfil all the objectives of the study. It has also been found that there are evidences of gender discrimination in media houses of Odisha. The results of the present research study reveal that the perception of the women journalists of Odisha about their professional status is not at par with their expectations.

Although the researcher has tried to get quotes, examples, surveys, interviews from sample journalists displaying what professional status they are getting but most of the journalists are very shy to talk about it openly despite repeated requests made by the researcher. This may be a reason that nobody has talked about the evidence of sexual harassment though there are some news on the newspaper on sexual harassment during the period of study.

With the passage of time, journalism as well as the role of women journalists are changing. But the two are not always evolving in harmony. Women are better educated and encouraged to achieve at work – just as journalism intensifies, jobs become tougher, and the economic pressures become greater. The digital revolution means journalists can work from anywhere, but what is sometimes viewed as the ‘electronic cottage’ may also become the ‘electronic cage’. As news cycles shorten and demands increase for a 24/7 multi-media presence, so the nature of the work has become more challenging (Frank, 2013). This dissertation strategically examined various areas related to the professional status of working women journalists in Odisha. The information was collected through census, survey through questionnaire, case studies and interviews. Women journalists were studied based on various elements that are the areas of study to know the professional status.

The present study focuses on the growing employment of women in mass media. As an instrument of change however, it had limited success. Despite some positive changes that have taken place over the years, including an increased number of women in newsroom, the task force was hardly a force for revolutionary change. As has been demonstrated already, some changes in the situation of women journalists were set in motion in some newsrooms as a direct result of the

task force. The proliferation of media houses especially news channels has definitely increased the recruitment of women in cities like Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. But the number of women journalists in small towns and district headquarters are still very low. This is partly because of poor pay and working conditions. Various patterns of employment contract also affect women journalists and limit their opportunities.

Safety and security are also major issues here in Odisha. Media organisations should provide special trainings on safety measures. Cases of physical threats have been reported in Odisha too. There is also a need to sensitize male journalists on how to treat their women colleagues and to involve them in gender programs. Just like their counterparts in other states of India, women journalists in Odisha continue to battle against their oppression in news room. More involvement of women in the women networks in the professional segment and union is also required. There is also a dire need to build up stronger networks and reach out, build up support groups and a potential network of friends to work together on issues. They should raise their voice in different platforms and pressurize the state governments to change the policies and regulations.

It is true that even in conjunction with social forces, it has not succeeded in creating the widest possible comfort zone for women in newsrooms, as well as equal opportunities for women to define news values and control the content of media. Majority of the women journalists complain about the lack of basic facilities in most of the media houses. The facilities like medical insurance, toilets for ladies etc should be provided to them. Some of the women respondents complained about the cooperation they are not getting from either the management or from their male colleagues while getting any outside threats.

The presents study doesn't provide a gloomy picture on the overall professional status the women journalists in various media houses in Odisha are enjoying. This research study results strongly suggests that a majority of the Odia newswomen are facing gender discrimination, physical threat, subject of domination inside the news room and lack of facilities etc. The study was great because it signalled that the organisations cared about some of the issues facing its women journalists and was willing to improve opportunities for them.

## **6.3 Recommendations of the Study**

After analysing the data collected through survey, case studies and interviews in the present study, the researcher and supervisor have pointed out some recommendations for the policy makers, media owners, women journalists and their male colleagues and last but not the least for the society. So that women journalists should get conducive work environment and well-defined professional status in the industry. The significant limitation of this study was to collect the data regarding the number of journalists and especially women journalists working in various media organisations across Odisha. There is no prior study available in this area and no list is available with the government machineries on working journalists. During the interview research, owners and editors don't want to share the number of women journalists working in their respective organisations. Therefore, the recommendations of the present study have been categorised separately for the policy makers like state government and central government, media owners, social sector like NGOs and last but not the least women journalists and their male counterparts too. Results of the study can be shared among policy makers, women journalists and editors and owners of the media houses across Odisha.

### **6.3.1 Owners of the Media Organisations**

Media owners are playing an important role in the life of a working woman journalist. Therefore, the media houses should actively work towards the overall growth of a professional life of a woman journalist. They should ensure gender equality in their offices. There should be no gender discrimination regarding work profile and salary structure of male and female journalists. They should get equal opportunity. Flexible working hours should be given to women journalists so that the percentage of women leaving the profession should be reduced. They need to arrange special facilities to ensure security and provide maternity leave as the work - life balance is pointed out as the main reason for discontinuity. It is recommended that for provision of maternity leave in media houses, owners should follow the government rules and regulations properly. State government along with National Commission of Women and Women Press Clubs should pressurise and enforce the management to follow the recommendations of various wage boards while giving employment to women journalists. Media houses should

publish gender-disaggregated data on job applications, shortlisting and appointment by level. They should also prepare Gender Equality Plans and mechanisms for monitoring progress.

It is also recommended that the management of the media houses should follow a strict policy on time bound promotion. They should commit towards equal opportunity. The study hence recommends that the annual performance assessments process of all owners should be influenced by the degree, to which they have recruited, promoted and developed women. This should be part of each owner's yearly objective and a factor in determining compensation. Information on training and development programs should be made widely available to all journalists working in respective media houses. Further owners should encourage woman journalists to go for career enhancement training programmes in planning their career paths. The management should strictly implement a policy on work place harassment and they should make sure that no such kind of activity will be tolerated inside the organisation. The management should also look into specific facilities required for the women employees to make the environment a woman friendly. They should work potentially towards bringing necessary changes in the work place.

### **6.3.2 Central & State Government and Policy Makers**

Instead of repeated requests from the journalists' unions, neither the state government nor the central government is coming forward in making a database on the working journalists across the state and nation. Therefore, it should be top most priority of the government to prepare a national level and also a state level database on working journalists including women journalists. The government of Odisha has announced medical insurance facilities for working journalists. It is a welcome decision though but needs proper implementation. Due to the lacklustre policy of the administration, the benefits of the insurance have not yet reached among the grass root level journalists. Most of the journalists working in the small towns and mofussils are not professionally trained and qualified. Therefore, the government should provide them proper training to acquire professional skill. Strict laws should be enforced on the media houses on the implementation of Wage Board recommendations to reduce pay inequality. State government should ensure on the establishment of sexual harassment cell in each and every media

organisation. Government department like Information and Public Relations department should impose fine on media houses where women employees face sexual discrimination, unequal pay and other such issues. More power should be given to media regulators.

### **6.3.3 Women Journalists and their Male Counterparts**

The results should be shared with working journalists to get the perceptions and experience of women journalists. Working male journalists should also cooperate with their women counterparts inside the news room. The male journalists should show concern and solidarity to their female colleagues. The newsroom environment should be a woman friendly. In matters of editorial decision, opinion of the women journalists should be taken. Male journalists should be given proper HR (human resource) training from time to time on how to co-work with their female counterparts both within and outside the news environment. To elevate gender equity in the news room more women should be given chance in the top-level positions. Women journalists should come up with their issues before the policy makers to get benefits of job.

### **6.3.4 Civil Society & NGOs**

NGOs and other civil society organisations are important constituents of any nation and state. Therefore, we have to involve them to bring changes in the media industry too. They should be engaged to make media accountable for gender equity by constantly monitoring the role of women journalists. Journalists union across the country should also work with global bodies dedicated to the women journalists like World Media Centre (WMC), International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), and International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to bring overall changes in the media industry. The civil society should complain more about gender stereotyping in the media and plan and implement campaigns on gender specific issues. Local NGOs and other activists working in the small towns should open their eyes on these issues and raise their voice before the authority so that the media women should not feel alone.

### **6.3.5 Media Researchers**

The study report can be shared among media students of various educational institutes for discussions and debates. This study is also a path finder for other researcher in the media research areas such as career progression, experience of workplace environment, work-life balance, job satisfaction and others related to women journalists. This research study can be used by researchers from other states. A future research study could focus on the other aspects of the life of women journalists like family demand and society pressure etc.