

Status of Female Workforce in Media: A Study of Diverse Professional Issues in Karnataka Media Houses

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Media reflects the role of women in the society. Media frame, interpret and amplify the policies and politics of the people. It talks about women in power and women empowerment. But Men still dominate media across all platforms like television, newspapers, online and wires. This gender gap is especially big at the major TV news networks of the country. Male always dominates the television panel discussions, interpretative stories. Therefore, present study investigated the status of women workforce in regional media houses. It is quantitative study. Questionnaire is used to collect primary data from the 50 respondents working/worked in print or electronic media. The study found that gender bias exists in media during recruitments and while assignment of work. Media organizations need to create women friendly environment and provide some special provisions to improve the working condition. The study revealed that there is a need to improve the women representation in media organization.

Key words: Women workforce, Professional issues, organizational policies and regional media

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I. Introduction

Media in India has drastically changed after independence. From socially responsible and social service, single radio and television channel, it has grown as a big industry. Today Indian media has various ways to form, mould and influence public opinion.

Mass media plays significant role in forming the society where men and women enjoy equal rights. Though the media has an important role in women empowerment, but it failed to eliminate gender discrimination within its own domain.

According to World Bank India had one of the lowest female participation in the workforce, ranking 120th among 131 countries. Jobs for Indian women remain primarily in the agriculture sector. The share of women in services and industry is less than 20% (2017).

Media reflects the role of women in the society. Media frame, interpret and amplify the policies and politics of the people. It talks about women in power and women empowerment. But men still dominate media across all platforms like television, newspapers, online and wires. In many media organization women are not equal associates in dissemination of information, nor are they equal partners in news gathering and interpreting story. Compared to men, women still report far less of the news. This gender gap is especially big at the major TV news networks of the country. Male always dominates the television panel discussions, interpretative stories.

Women who work in media organization are always played the softer roles such as lifestyle, culture, entertainment, health reporting etc. one can find the women journalists involving in desk work, special page or features section. Hardly any women journalists can be found like politics, crime, sports, business reporting etc. whenever women issues arise they are called to cover them. But the ultimate power remains with men in media.

Due their beauty female anchors are preferred by television channels as their presence on screen can get more eyeballs. But in print media countable women write for editorial or opinion pages. According to a survey by Newsland, men accounted for most of the by-lines on the Edit and Op-ed pages.

Though women are more experienced than men, media organization prefer men to be in the top or higher position for many reasons. Overall women promoted at a lower rate than men in the regional media organization.

If women achieved the top position in any media organization, they forced to quit the job due to inflexible working hours as they have to maintain a balance between household chores and night-shifts.

Female workforce always ignored by Indian media houses. Men and women may have different perspectives. By linking both, one can get accurate and balanced opinion of the situation, which is essential for media.

II. Literature Review

The status of women in the media is bleak as ever; little progress has been made. While it has improved from what it used to be five decades ago, not much progress has been made in the last two decades (Shreya, 2015).

The Global Media Monitoring Project 2015 has found that only 37 per cent of all stories, including in newspapers and television, were reported by women. This was the same figure a decade ago. No forward movement has been made. Online, however, women's representation was 42 per cent.

A report "Inside the News: Challenges and Aspirations of Women Journalists in Asia and the Pacific", a study launched by UNESCO, and the UN Women and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in 2015 reveals that, although the presence of women in media has more than doubled in two decades, they constitute only 28.6 percent of the media workforce in Asia and the Pacific. Men outnumber women 4:1 in India.

The report states that sexual harassment remains a key issue in media workplaces with 34 percent of journalists in Asia and the Pacific saying they witnessed sexual harassment at work. At least 17 percent of female journalists have personally experienced workplace sexual harassment, and 59 percent of the time it is a superior who is the perpetrator.

In its analysis of the Indian media scene, the report remarks that the country has a well-established media and its strong media landscape was full of women journalists.

In 2011, the International Women's Media Foundation reported that around the world, only a third of journalists are women (Byerly & Carolyn, 2011). Studies conducted by Canadian researchers Robinson and Armande have found that 28 per cent of newspaper editors are female (1999). And according to San Diego State University communications professor Lauzen, 18 per cent of the directors, executive producers, writers, cinematographers and editors on the 250 top-grossing films of 2011 were women.

Although women now have a significant presence in both print and TV newsrooms, they still face a distinct "glass ceiling: while women make up 50 per cent or more of writers, producers and editors, they make up only 40 per cent of top-level management and only a quarter are found at the highest levels of authority (Byerly & Carolyn, 2011).

Scope of the study

The study is very significant as the female workforces are reducing in number in media houses and all higher posts are occupied by male. The technical and other skill oriented work in media is also controlled by male workforce. The study would bring out the necessary condition which should be created in media houses to take it women friendly. As it is imperative to have women employees in media houses to represent and give justice o major section of the society media has to take certain measure to do so.

Objectives

The present study would like to investigate the status of women workforce in regional media houses. The study specifically finds out the opinions of women journalists belongs to different age group related to various professional issues, the longevity of media profession among women. It researches about the gender bias perspective of women journalists in Karnataka media houses. The study also investigated the problems faced while imparting duties, the organizational policies related to women employees and explored the strategies to have comfort for women workforce in media organizations.

III. Methodology

It is a quantitative study used survey method to collect primary data. The structured questionnaire is used to collect the dat. 50 respondents were selected for the study from newspapers, magazines, television, production houses and web media. The study is conducted in Bangalore as it is hub of Karnataka media houses. The respondents have either worked previously in the media industry or presently working in the media profession. The 50 completed questionnaires were selected for the analysis and draw conclusions based on the objectaires.

Analysis

The age of respondents is spread across 20 to 45. Therefore, they are divided under three age groups. There are 11 respondents belonging to 20 to 25 years old age group. About 24 respondents were from 26-30 years and 15 respondents from above 31 years. As age group determines the experience which can provide variety of responses age group is considered as one of the variable based on which the responses were segregated and analysed. Majority of the respondents are journalism graduates. Thus they can evaluate the situation and competent to work in media field.

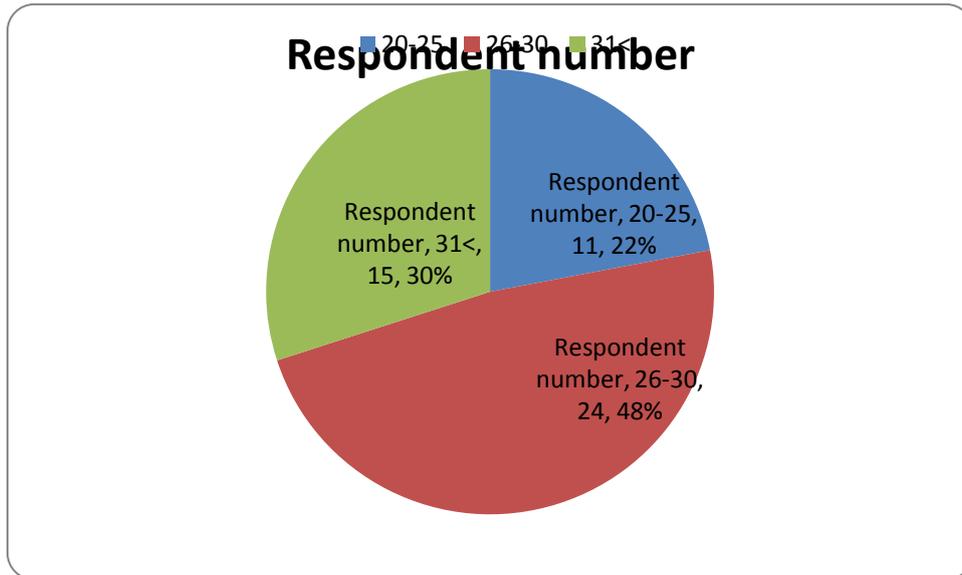


Chart 1: Respondent' age graph

Out of 50 respondents 34 are married and 16 are unmarried. Among these 34 are journalism graduates and 16 are not journalism graduates. They are working different media outlets such as television, newspaper, magazine, web media and production houses and they are designated as sub editor/copy editor, graphic artist, news editor, panel producer, Copy editor, digital content producer. Some of the respondents (24%) are working as reporters. Another 8% of the respondents are working in teaching field. However, majority of the respondents (68%) are working at back end office oriented responsibilities. Respondents' experience range between 2 years to 22 years.

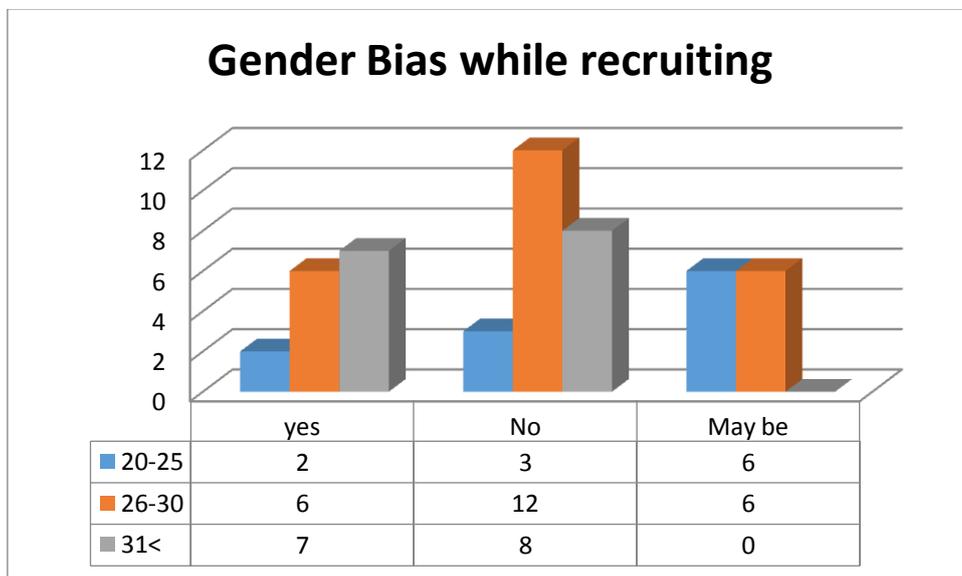


Chart 2: Respondents opinion on experience of gender bias during recruitment

According to respondents, they have experienced gender bias at the time of recruitment itself. Among 20 to 25 years age group 20% said yes, 60% said may be and 30% said they have not experienced gender bias while recruitment. In 26 to 30 years age group same amount of women journalist (25%) said yes and may be and 50% said no. Among above 31 years age group 53.4% said no and 46.6% said there is gender bias in media recruitment.

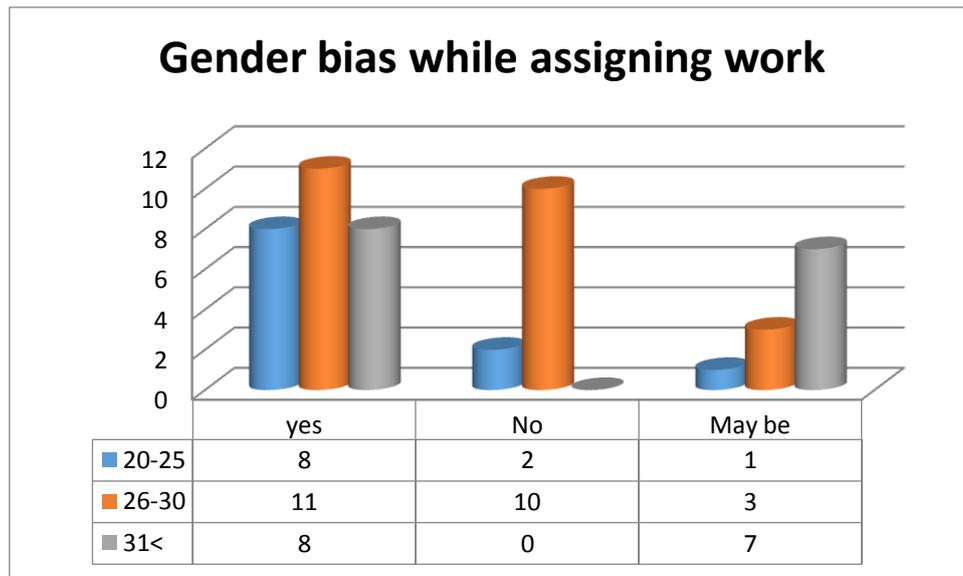


Chart 3: Experienced gender bias in assignments

Irrespective of age group all the respondents said they have experienced gender bias while assigning the work. It is important to notice that even the more experienced respondents did not deny the gender bias.

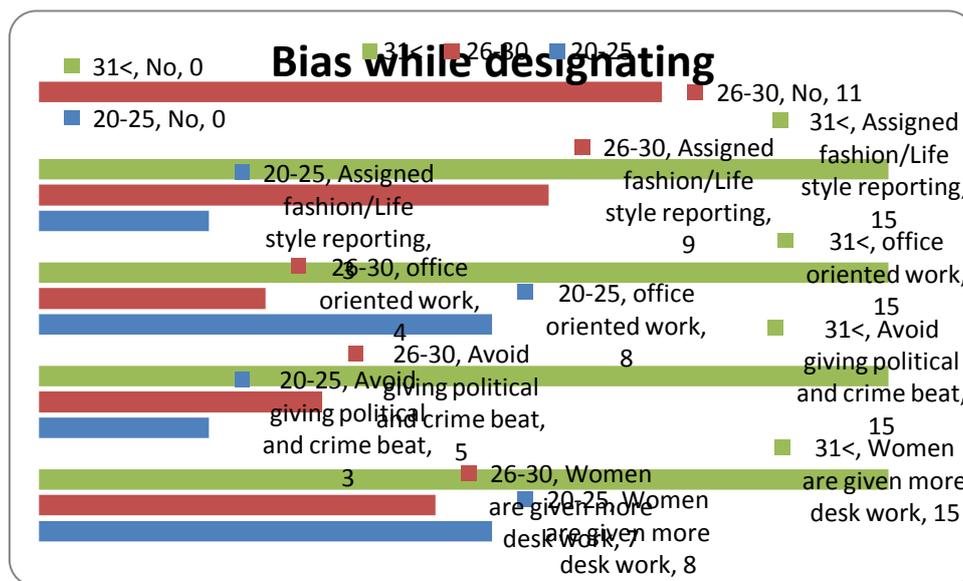


Chart 4: Kind of assignments given to the women employees

Among respondents, majority said that there is gender bias and women are assigned to cover light news though they work as reporters. The designation as reporter itself is less among women media professionals. Though they are into reporting they are assigned with fashion/life style /cinema reporting and avoid giving political and crime beat. Others are given more desk work or office oriented work.

The majority respondents worked in night shift. About 72% of the respondents are even working in the night shift. Rest 28% did not work on night shift. However, they have worked late night. The majority of (87.5%) women of 26-30 years are working in night shift. Among higher age group of above 31 years 53.3% have worked in night shift.

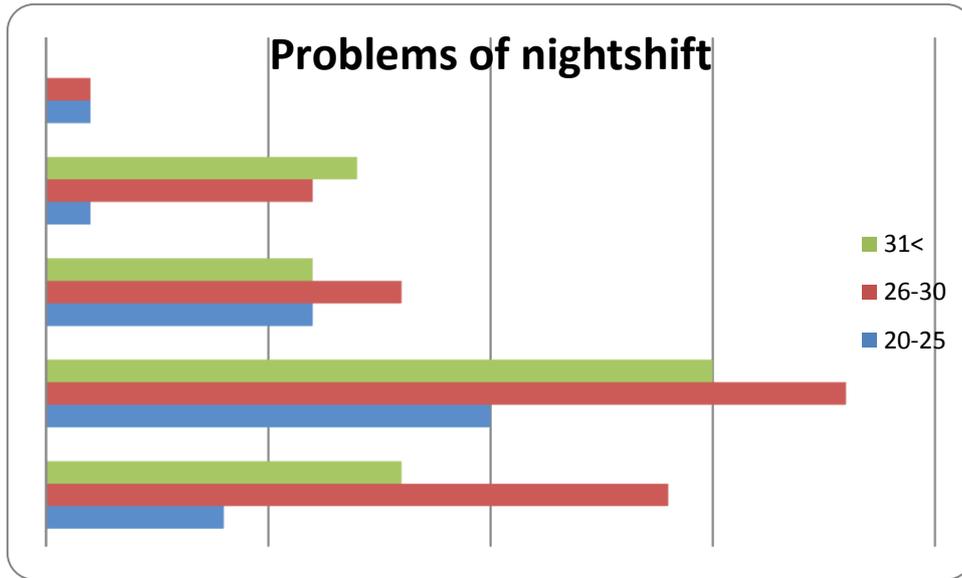


Chart 5: Problems faced due to night shift

Except two, every one said there have faced problems due to night shift. Some of the respondents (28%) said night shifts effects their family relationship. About 86% of the respondents said night shift is causing various health problems. For 52% of the respondents opined family is uncomfortable with the nightshift. And 40% of the respondents said it is not safe to work in night shift.

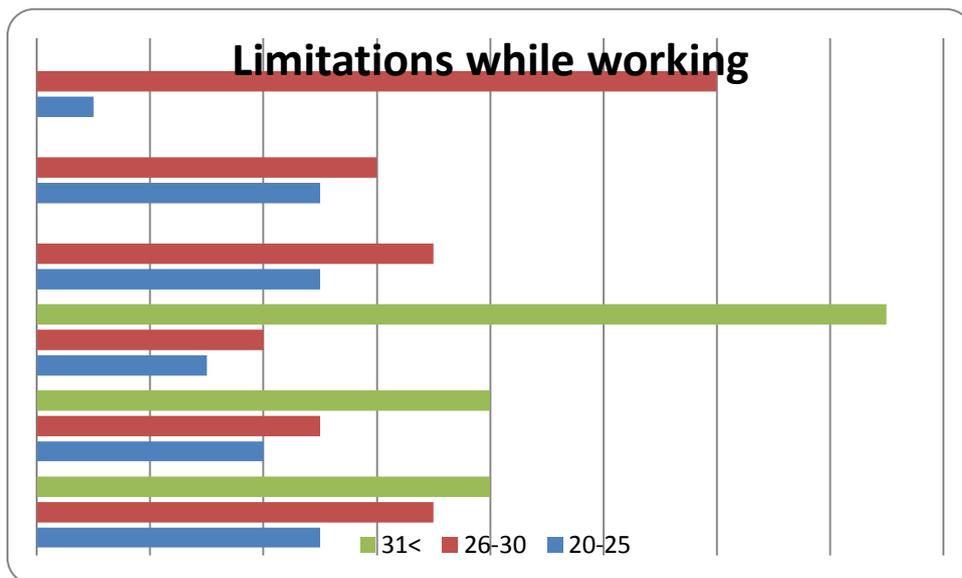


Chart 6: Limitation due gender while exploring the news

The respondents said they are facing certain limitations while delivering professional obligation. About 26% of the respondents said they do not have any barrier comparing to that of men while imparting duty. However majority respondents cited some barriers. About 40% of the respondents said women journalists are less preferred while sharing news by the sources, 34% said difficult establish sources for women journalists, 44% said seniors or in charge person avoid giving assignments where journalist need to gather news in mob, 24% opined that sources easily contact male journalist to share the news and 22% of the respondents felt that women cannot enter fearlessly to all the places.

The data revealed that there are no special provisions at work in media industry. Except 2 respondent majority (35) respondents said there is no special facilities for women journalists and rest 13 said may be there is special considerations in their organizations.

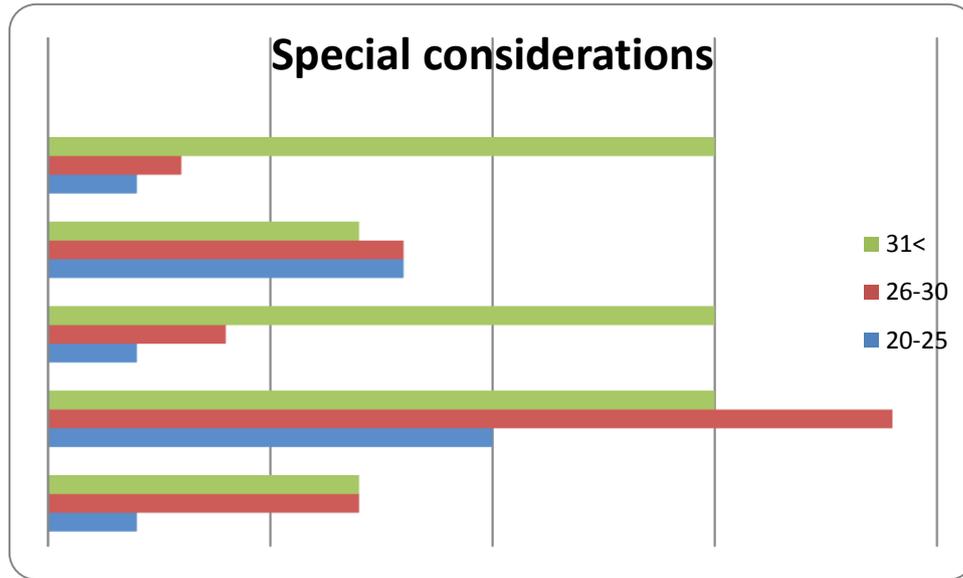


Chart 7: Special provisions required for women journalists at office

All the respondents felt the need of certain facilities at the work place of women. All 15 respondents of above 31-year age group said there is a need of day care centre at the office. About 23 respondents said organization should take care of women safety especially during night shift. Majority (44) respondents felt that there should be flexible working hours for women, 21 respondents thought that there should be ladies room to relax during health issues and the time of uncomfortableness and 16 respondents felt that there should not be night shift for women. It is important to notice that majority among younger age group is comfortable with night shift and majority of older age group does not want night shift. This may be due to their family commitment.

The respondents are asked whether they have planned to quit the job due to working environments of media. About 20 respondents said they want to quit the media job, another 24 respondents said they may quit the job if they get job opportunity outside the media. Only 6 respondents said as of now they do not have the plan to quit media profession.

Respondents were given with series of statements to know the level of agreement related to various media professional issues.

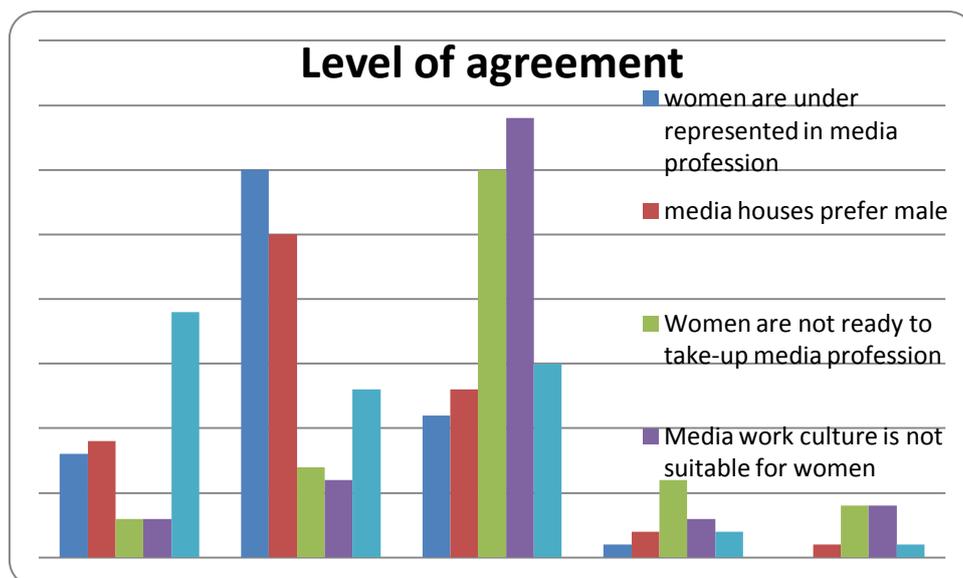


Chart 8: opinion on different professional conditions

Majority 76% of the respondent agreed with the statement 'women are underrepresented in media profession'. Another 22% were neutral and only 2% disagreed. About 68% agreed that 'media houses prefer male'. About 20% respondents agreed that women are not ready to take-up media profession and 20% disagreed with the statement. However, majority 60% were neutral. About 18% felt that media work culture is not suitable

for women, 14% disagreed and rest and 68% were neutral. Majority (64%) of the respondents agreed that 'More women should get in to media profession to get more voice', 6% disagreed and 30% were neutral.

IV. Discussion

The respondents gave various reasons for their plan to quit or quitting the media job. Some of the reasons cited were, media houses have long working hours. They are not paying based on work. There is more work pressure which leads more stress and they get monotonous work. They are facing health problems and have no time for family due to night shift, got better opportunities.

Many of the respondents felt that status of women journalists is good. However, respondents opined that media cannot be long term carrier for women as they need to concentrate on family and their health. Women should be given political and crime beats without any bias, many of the women journalists prefer to work in magazine as there will not be much pressure and no night shift. They said that only mentally and physically strong women can only survive in today's media working environment. Some of the respondents felt that the condition of women is very bad. However, some of them felt that men and women are treated equally in the media organizations.

Respondents are asked to provide suggestion for media organizations to have women employee friendly work culture. Respondents said, women should be given equal opportunity, organization should provide medical facilities, mothers should be given relaxation of night shift, in every media organization there must be complaint box where women can place their complaints and ask for solutions, should take safety measure while night shift such as dropping home after the work safely, the interested field should be assigned rather than limiting her to lifestyle reporting and desk work.

V. Conclusion

The study found that there is opinion difference based on the experience and the field of work. The women journalists working in print media are more comfortable rather than women working in electronic media though the number of women representation is much higher in electronic media. It is found that women who are married and having children are suffering more with the kind of media work culture than the young unmarried journalists. As respondents are from different media houses and different kind of media organization the cross sectional information is received. It is found that there is gender bias exist at the time of recruitment as media houses prefer men and biases found during assigning of the work. It is also evident that very few women are working as reporters and majority are working at the office, doing desk work and presentation duty. The women journalists are assigned with lifestyle reporting and superiors avoid giving political and crime beat.

Women journalists felt gender as disadvantage in news gathering as they felt sources of news would be comfortable sharing news with men rather than women, movement in mob is not safety, difficult to establish and maintain sources. They are also facing problems due to night shift such as resistance from the family, health issues, safety and tensions in family relationship. Though they require certain facilities at work place such as day care centres, ladies rest rooms, flexible working hours and no night shifts, media organizations rarely take care of these. Due to all these problems majority of the respondents planning to quit or change the job. It is also noticed that married women prefer to quit the job comparing to unmarried and older age group prefer print media rather that electronic media.

The research found that women are underrepresented in the media organization employment, men are preferred by the media organization over women, some of the women are not ready to continue their media job and media work culture is not suitable for women. However, to improve the condition of women in media organizations more and more women should get into the media field especially at higher level as administrators.

In order to increase the women workforce and to eradicate the existent gender gap, they should be given equal opportunity in the decision-making power and the coverage of news. Women's professional bodies should be established for the protection of women journalists. Media should play its role by empowering women by giving equal opportunity and gender equality within its sphere.

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