

Major Challenges for Media Employees in Pakistan: Disparity of Resources Between Male and Female Journalists

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: April 12, 2026 Accepted: July 13, 2026 Keywords : Working Conditions, Journalists, Challenges, Media, Gender DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21340962	<i>This study presents working conditions of media employees in Pakistan and what problems are being faced by employees. The study questions were targeted to answer the overall level of job-satisfaction for working conditions in general and across media organizations as perceived by male and female journalists. Furthermore, the study investigated women's status in Pakistani media by exploring their status in the newsroom, their career advancement, and the role that harassment and discrimination play in professional attainment. It finds that society distinct individuals are based on gender. This stratification leads to unequal power relations within society and particularly in media organizations. Gender as a normative ideal is defined by the nature of media organization and the hierarchy of power that exists within media organizations. In Pakistan, gender roles and expectations are stilling rained in the patriarchal way of life. The primary objective of this study is beyond how many, the even more critical question is where the women are, and how they are performing their journalistic duties with the challenges they confront and making progress in their career. A web survey was conducted among male and female journalists working in newspaper and electronic media organizations across Pakistan. The research design used was 'convergent parallel mixed method' with a pragmatic worldview. Overall, 200 responses, comprising male and female journalists are used for analysis.</i>

Introduction

The media industry in Pakistan is facing many challenges. The industry took a boost after the approval of licensing for electronic media to the private sector after the establishment of the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) in 2002. In Pakistan, the rapid growth of media organizations is used as a tool to get maximum profit, target own interest, enforce media ownership, influence political opinion, and get rid of taxes especially by big media groups (Lawrence & Weber, 2014). In this race of power game rather financially or politically, media houses have ignored the key potential behind running these media organizations, i.e. its workforce or media employees (Deuze, 2013). According to Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), around 100 satellite licensed television are working in Pakistan (Pakistan, 2020). While the figure of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics revealed that 707 newspapers are currently working across the country (Pakistan, Newspapers and Periodicals by Province, 2020).

Similarly, as media in developing countries like Pakistan is considered a central part of all activities as masses can make their opinion, report issues, development at the economic, political, social, or diplomatic level is being conveyed through it (Jalali, 2013). However, the most prominent conditions of working environment that prevails in the media industry in Pakistan include no proper sitting arrangement, noise, crowd and disturbance of people moving to the places, strict deadlines, organizational pressure, long working hours, unavailability of the separate washroom for ladies, no fixed working hours, income issues in some organizations, unavailability of health insurance, no social protection, no job security, unpaid sick leaves, stressful working environment, no proper lighting and, politics. These conditions are enough to cause stress to the media employees that leads to health hazards and serious issues to wellbeing. (Liu, Yang & Yu, 2015). It is generally observed that employees who do not have adequate facilities to do their work properly or working in badly maintained or poor conditions often complain of many problems like lack of concentration, headache, uneasiness. In media organization such complains are a routine which are mostly ignored. These initial problems aggravate with time if proper attention is not paid to them (Aloisi, 2015). In this regard, Gender is a category of social stratification in society, built upon connotations connected to individual roles that signify a hierarchy of power. The patriarchal relations that exist in a society where men have more power, intensified 'unequal gender relations'. Societal structures of 'masculinity' are deep-rooted in the journalistic career, where masculinity is bestowed additional weight as compare to femininity, so journalism is being perceived as a career for men as it encourages masculinity. The male and female ratio in the Pakistani newsroom is 5:1 and influential positions in the newsroom are generally

male-dominated. A newsroom is a reactionary place in which journalists struggle for 'space, power and control', symbolizes through competition over the story, certain desks (beats). These practices in the newsrooms and allocation of assignments depict work division based upon gender role allocations and stereotypes that flourish in society. Considering the great change that people are undergoing in Pakistani society, it seems to be necessary to explore the role performance of women on a cross-sectional cultural level.

Thus, in the current study, we examined the working conditions faced by journalists in Pakistan and working conditions for them. We used Structural Equation Modelling to further assess the structural model. Further we have discussed the results and made recommendations accordingly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research has focused on the areas which needed more attention to sorting out problems of media employees especially in the media industry of third world countries which are still far beyond the technologies used by developed countries for the betterment of their employees.

The study was based on three main constructs

- i. Practices and Policies
- ii. Occupation Safety
- iii. Perks and Privileges

These constructs are further divided into four variables of each.

Practices and Policies	Occupational Safety	Perks and Privileges
Working Conditions Hiring and Termination Policies of Organization	Indoor Environment Risk Factor Health Issues Level of Satisfaction	Pay and Reward Medical Benefits Future Considerations

2.1 Practices and Policies

2.1.1a Nature of Work, Working Hours. Harris & Greenspan (2016) described the nature of work as factors essential for any specific job giving an ample opportunity to nurture, initiate, or provides satisfaction to workers of any organization. Trepanier, Fernet, Austin, Forest, Vallerand (2014) describes this term as a process for finishing any task improving their abilities, and grab opportunities for progress.

The capability and ability of employees will decrease at organizations where working standards are not maintained or the working atmosphere has a risk factor.

Improper or misuse of technology is another major risk factor that adversely affects the performance of employees in comparison with organizations maintaining quality work standards. (Epe et al., 2018).

i. Working Conditions of Workers.

Working conditions are considered as the work environment and terms and conditions offered to employees of any organization to nurture their abilities and give the maximum of their potential (Kinnie., Hutchinson & Purcell 2000).

According to a study by James McDonal (2019), uncomfortable working condition is also one of the major causes which affect productivity and efficiency of employees.

ii. Hiring and Termination Rules

In the light of Fuchs (2013) views, organizations should provide equal opportunities to anyone without any discrimination on basis of gender for any post. Howe (2013) explained that a specific procedure should be adopted for hiring employees to ensure equal opportunities for all to get a job as per their abilities and talent.

iii. Policies of organization:

Low skilled, uneducated, or helping staff's efficiency and dedication improves which multiples business ratio for owners. Thus, even in settings where employees do simple tasks and are relatively low skilled, participatory work environments can enhance business performance (Nguyen, 2017).

Studies explored that giving a higher rank to employees or promoting them to be a supervisor has direct consequences on raising the confidence level besides giving them a sense of pride and enhance their level of job satisfaction which results in better performance (Kahar, 2019).

2.2 Occupational Safety

- i. Indoor Environment
- ii. Health Issues

iii. Level of Satisfaction

i. **Indoor Office Environment.**

The study of McDonald (2019) said that lack of proper setup leads to “set up to fail”. It means if employees of any organization do not have proper space and resources to perform their work conveniently and give their best work, it is called the failure of set up.

It includes convenient office buildings with the availability of proper safety precautions to prevent injuries. Health experts also consider imperative appropriate occupational health requirements to limit both short as well as long-term hazards which are required to prevent any kind of physical or mental illness for employees, (Bahr, 2014).

ii. Risk Factor:

The findings of Debnath, Blackman & Haworth (2015) said risk factors at work zone and the frequency of accidents set the contribution level of employees at workplaces as high risk reduce employees input level at a certain organization.

They find out that if employees do not know the intensity and importance of safety measures at any industry or organization but lack of safety measures implementation or the number of accidents affects their dedication and attachment with a particular job.

iii. **Health Issues**

Forty decades of sociological stress research offer five major findings.

First, when stressors (negative events, chronic strains, and traumas) are measured comprehensively, their damaging impacts on physical and mental health are substantial.

Second, differential exposure to stressful experiences is a primary way that gender, racial-ethnic, marital status, and social class inequalities in physical and mental health are produced.

Third, minority group members are additionally harmed by discrimination stress.

Fourth, stressors proliferate over the life course and across generations, widening health gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged group members.

Fifth, the impacts of stressors on health and well-being are reduced when persons have high levels of mastery, self-esteem, and/or social support. With respect to policy, to help individuals cope with adversity, tried and true coping and support interventions should be more widely disseminated and employed (Thoits, 2010).

iv. **Level of Satisfaction.**

In the opinion of Benz (2005) satisfaction is considered as the value or importance people obtain through their work. It also includes that workers from any of the income group can easily get necessary and basic facilities and manage their families conveniently.

2.3 Perks and Privileges

- i. Pay and Reward
- ii. Medical Benefits
- iii. Future Considerations

i. **Pay and Reward.**

According to Jung & Yoon, (2015), pay structure has significant results on the performance of employees of any organization and it is the main cause of employees leaving or switching their job. Sturman & Wang, (2013) said that there is a dire impact of pay on the motivation level of employees.

ii. **Medical Benefits.**

Medical facilities are a basic requirement of employees of any organization. Bant (2019) in his study that medical care and wellbeing of employees is rated as a dire or key factor for anyone while accepting any job offer.

iii. **Future Consideration**

He said the performance of employees in any organization is highly linked with the medical and welfare benefits offered by the office. It has multi-dimensional effects on employees not only while selecting a job but also to remain connected with that organization. (Ajunwa, Crawford, Schultz, 2017). Schallom (2012) describe that the job of journalism was a dream career among youngsters from the age group of 21 to 30 as they have more strength to work long hours, the potential to resist sleeplessness or less sleep. He further determined that almost after six years of this nature of job ultimately result in affecting personal as well as professional life of employees. At that time, they start switching jobs or even in some cases profession especially for balancing their family life. Media organizations have undergone rapid change in Pakistan during the last two decades. The significant growth of employment in the media sector and long shift hours of workers associated with media organizations have produced evident consequences on the business of the media industry.

1. Theoretical Framework

Motivation Theories

The study is based on motivational theories divided into two groups. Motivation theories are used in the study to review the motivational behavior of employees in different circumstances according to their position and situation. These theories are divided into two groups.

- a) Content Theories and
- b) Process and Performance Theories.

These theories analyzed the response of employees to get satisfaction from their work through fulfilling their desired needs. Based on this concept media owner should know the problems of their employees and what are their requirements to manage their issues. Few theories are applied to check employees' cognitive processes behind their behaviors and actions.

These theories elaborate that media employees do not accept unequal or unfair behavior in their organizations, they follow the results of their actions and repeat them if get any positive response or incentive and boost their efforts if their endeavors are acknowledged and give them benefit in the form of rewards. The following diagram presents motivation theories and their adjustment.

Research Hypotheses:

H₁. Equal opportunities have significant positive effects on journalists' working conditions.

H₂. Hiring and Termination policy has significant positive effects on journalists' working conditions.

H₃. Office Environment has significant positive effects on journalists' working conditions.

H₄. Pay and rewards have significant positive effects on journalists' working conditions.

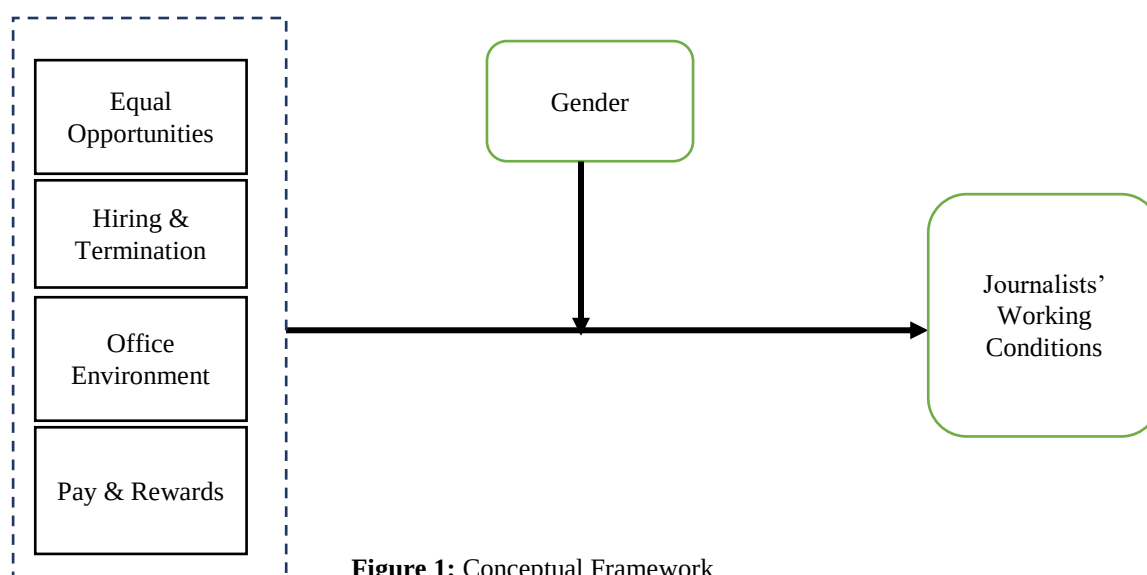


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4.1 RESEARCH METHODS:

A web survey was conducted among male and female journalists working in newspaper and electronic media organizations across Pakistan. The online questionnaire was created on Google Forms, following which its link was shared with the participants through email and WhatsApp. The snowball sampling technique was employed to gain maximum responses. Journalists were requested to share the survey link with their colleagues. The inclusion criterion that participants must be working journalist was clearly mentioned in the survey instructions.

4.1 Ethical Consideration

Although no IRB approval was obtained (as there were no IRB requirements) however, the participants were duly informed about the nature of the research. In the beginning of questionnaire, a detail note was given, ensuring confidentiality of the respondents. There was no option given to respondents to write their name. Furthermore, respondents were ensured that their responses will be used only for academic purposes by the researchers and no part of their responses would be shared for commercial use. It was also communicated that there was no financial incentive for respondents and their participation was purely voluntary. Further, there was no personal, physical or psychological risk involved in the study and at any stage they could stop or quit answering to questions. They also have the right to refuse and quit at their will.

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Overall, 200 responses, comprising male and female journalists are used for analysis.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in the first phase of analysis to acquire frequency distribution, mean, and effect size results. Discriminant and convergent validity tests were also performed, whereby convergent validity exhibited correlations among the construct items and discriminant validity ascertained that the constructs independently measured what they intended to without any cross-correlations.

Next, the Multiple Group Analysis (MGA) technique under partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to examine the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between studied variables of the research.

4.3 Multiple Group Analysis

The hypotheses were formulated in this study to (1) examine gender differences in perks and privileges, organizational policies and practices and working conditions (2) gauge the moderating effect of gender on the relationship perks and privileges, organizational policies and practices and working conditions. Since hypotheses involved two sample groups for comparison between males and females, partial least squares multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA) was used for statistical analysis. Employing bootstrapping results, PLS-MGA is a non-parametric test for differences between group-specific results.

5. Results

5.1 Measurement Model: Measurement of Invariance

Since the study involved two groups (male and female), the measurement of invariance was calculated for the MGA. Measurement invariance or measurement equivalence is a statistical property of measurement which indicates whether the same construct is being measured across particular groups. Violations of measurement invariance may hinder the meaningful interpretation of data. Prior to measurement invariance, convergent validity was calculated for both groups to examine correlations of the construct items. Factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha values were further used to determine reliability. The obtained values confirmed the reliability of both groups' data.

5.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was used to assess the differences among the constructs. Although multiple statistical procedures measure discriminant validity, for the current study, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) was employed (Henseler et al., 2014). Below Table shows the values for HTMT, which were acceptable and thus established discriminant validity.

	Equal Opportunities	Hiring and Termination	Office Environment	Pay and Rewards	Working Conditions
Equal Opportunities					
Hiring and Termination	0.891				
Office Environment	0.563	0.687			
Pay and Rewards	0.759	0.947	0.69		
Working Conditions	0.56	1.127	0.656	0.561	

5.3 Structural Model

The impact of gender on the association among the perks and privileges, organizational policies and practices and working conditions and safety was evaluated through the structural model in PLS-SEM.

5.4 Model I for Females

Below table presents the effects of equal opportunities, hiring and termination policy, pay and rewards and office environment on female journalists' working conditions. The results found that equal opportunities and pay and rewards have no significant effect on female journalists' working condition. However, hiring and termination policy and office environment significantly influence female journalists' working condition. The adjusted coefficient of determination, R^2 , for females' journalists' working condition is 0.324, indicating that equal opportunities, hiring and termination policy, pay and rewards and office environment explain 32 percent of the variation in females' journalists' working condition.

Table: Path Coefficients for Female Journalists' Working Conditions

Paths	B	SE	t-value	Sign
Equal Opportunities -> Working Conditions	0.032	0.161	0.202	0.84
Hiring and Termination -> Working Conditions	0.44	0.155	2.829	0.005
Office Environment -> Working Conditions	0.273	0.1	2.737	0.006
Pay and Rewards -> Working Conditions	-0.116	0.115	1.004	0.315

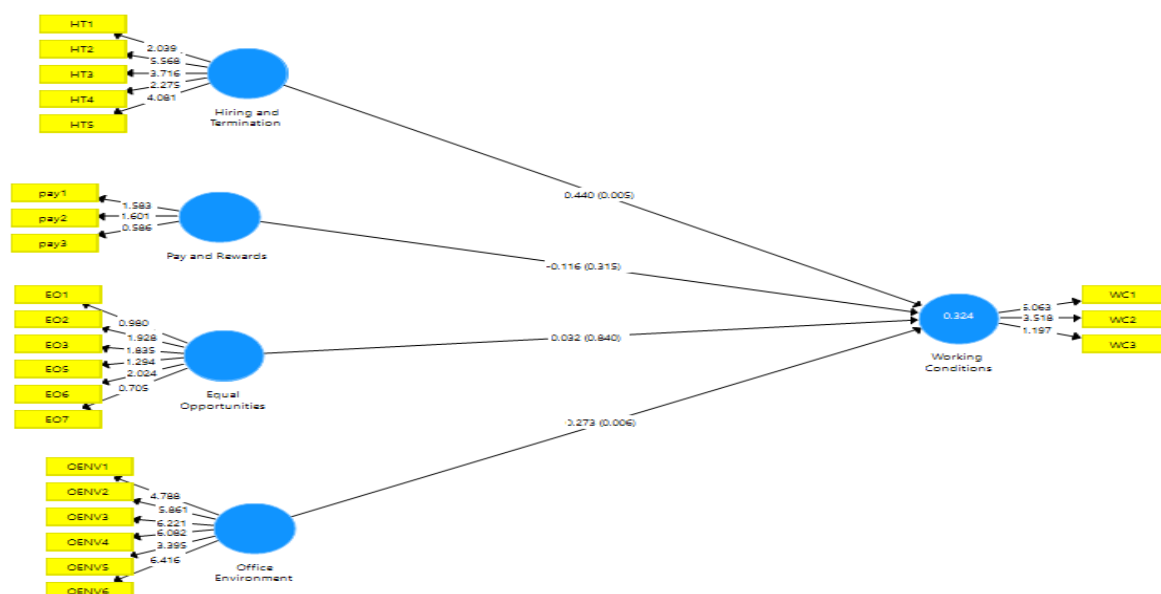


Figure: Path Model for Females

5.4.1 Effect Size (f^2)

The effect size, f^2 , presents the magnitude of effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. Cohen (1992) suggested standardized values of effect size, such as small ($f^2 \geq 0.02$), medium ($f^2 \geq 0.15$), and large ($f^2 \geq 0.35$). This study's effect size results are reported in below Table shows that hiring a termination policy has medium effect (0.156) on female journalists' working condition and office environment has low effect (0.081). However, equal opportunities and pay and rewards have low effect on female journalists' working condition.

Table: Effect Size (f^2) for Endogenous Variables

Variables	f^2
Equal Opportunities	0.001
Hiring and Termination	0.156
Office Environment	0.081
Pay and Rewards	0.014

5.5 Model II for Males

Below table presents the effects of equal opportunities, hiring and termination policy, pay and rewards and office environment on male journalists' working conditions. The results found no significant effect of equal opportunities, hiring and termination policy, pay and rewards and office environment on male journalists' working conditions.

The adjusted coefficient of determination, R^2 , for female's journalists' working condition is 0.350, indicating that equal opportunities, hiring and termination policy, pay and rewards and office environment explain 35 percent of the variation in female journalists' working condition.

Table: Path Coefficients for Male Journalists' Working Conditions

Paths	B	SE	t-Value	P Values
Equal Opportunities -> Working Conditions	0.101	0.126	0.807	0.420
Hiring and Termination -> Working Conditions	0.170	0.187	0.906	0.365
Office Environment -> Working Conditions	0.281	0.154	1.828	0.068
Pay and Rewards -> Working Conditions	0.232	0.202	1.145	0.252

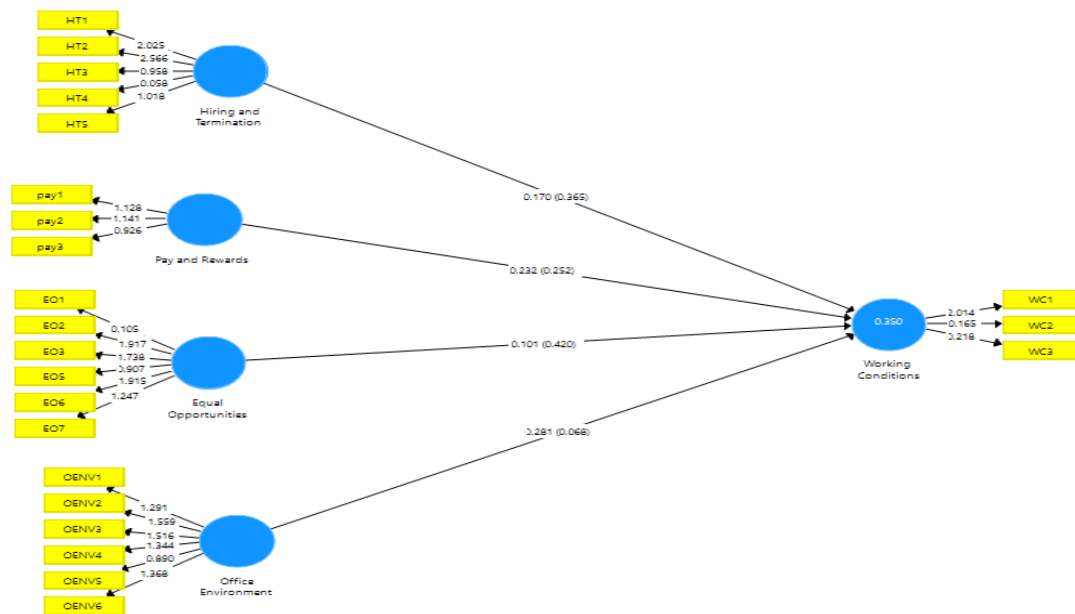


Figure: Path Model for Males

5.5.1 Effect Size (f^2)

The effect size, f^2 , results for male are reported in below Table shows that equal opportunities has small effect on male journalist's working conditions. However, hiring and termination policy, office environment and pay and rewards have medium effect on male journalists' working conditions.

Table: Effect Size (f^2) for Endogenous Variable

Variables	f^2
Equal Opportunities	0.012
Hiring and Termination	0.03
Office Environment	0.078
Pay and Rewards	0.066

5.6 Moderation Effect:

The moderating effect of gender between equal opportunities, hiring and termination policy, pay and rewards and office environment and journalists' working conditions was statistically analyzed via a t-test with pooled standard errors in an MGA. In multi-group evaluation, contrasts in path coefficients between sub-samples are explained as moderating effects. This method is described as the parametric approach to differences between path estimators that are tested for significance with a t-test (Chin, 2000).

Table: Moderating Effect of Gender

Paths	Path Coefficients-diff (male - female)	t-value	Sign
Equal Opportunities -> Working Conditions	0.069	0.373	0.746
Hiring and Termination -> Working Conditions	-0.27	0.864	0.271
Office Environment -> Working Conditions	0.008	0.461	0.922
Pay and Rewards -> Working Conditions	0.347	0.081	0.161

The results in above table indicates that gender doesn't significantly moderate the relationship equal opportunities, hiring and termination policy, pay and rewards and office environment and journalists' working conditions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Media is a competitive and demanding field. The nature of the journalistic work based on immediacy and urgency follows the deadlines. No media organization can perform better if the employees are not satisfied and give their best. The media industry is based on creative work, which needs peace of mind, a healthy working

environment, a competent workforce, cooperative management and friendly policies of the organization and government. Unfortunately, the study results unveiled that employees working in media organizations in Pakistan have not been provided adequate facilities to work comfortably.

Consequently, they do not give a maximum of their potential to the respective organization. Ultimately, the working standards of the media industry in Pakistan are far behind than the international world, especially in developed countries. Motivational theories also advocate that for better results, problems of employees should be considered on priority. These theories are divided into two groups, content and performance theories, elaborate that for better performance, employees' output can be enhanced by addressing their needs, encouraging healthy competition, better supervision, and valuing their self-respect. These theories analyzed the response of employees to get satisfaction from their work through fulfilling their desired needs. Based on this concept, media owners should know their employees' problems and what their requirements are to manage their issues. This study concludes that women journalists face discrimination in the professional field. Less interaction and limited mobility are also main hurdles in their career growth. Women journalists perform double duties at work as well as at home and suppose to create a balance. The only way for women journalists to reach the top level in their profession is to sacrifice their home responsibilities or delay their marriages to give more time to their work. It is concluded that journalism can be viewed as strengthening its rationality on gendering in terms of practices. Women have proved their proficiency in devising genuine journalism. Undoubtedly, there are remarkable revolutionary changes in society that reflect in every field, and women have proved that the stereotypes devised and popularized against them are baseless. In journalism, gender-based segregation can easily be observed while dividing journalistic topics like the themes that deal with the issues of power, structures, elites, and facts and news are exclusively supposed to be the topics of male journalism.

On the other hand, themes of home, family, and other stories of human interest are thought to be female journalism. According to this study, the editorial offices have been found to consider the segregation of topics based on gender similarly to other professions. Research proves that males and females may experience differently as professional journalists; however, female journalists employ their efforts and professionalism equal to their male co-workers. The issues that discourage women from staying in this career are lack of proper job structure, lack of basic facilities, and job security.

6.1 Study Limitations:

The researcher has faced difficulties approaching media employees due to COVID-19. The questionnaire was circulated electronically through email and what's app among respondents.

The responses of non-journalists were less as compare to the journalists as they do not use smartphones and technology and due to lockdown, it was not possible to approach them personally. Another issue was the language problem. The questionnaire was designed in the English language that is why employees of Urdu newspapers or those who have less education level were reluctant to submit their responses. Sampling techniques also create problems to generalize the results on the whole population and figure out problems faced by media employees in Pakistan at their workplace.

6.2 Areas for Further Research

The study points out that there is a need to work exclusively on the occupational safety of employees in the media organization of Pakistan. A comparative study on the working of media employees in Urdu and English media organizations will also be significant for future researchers. A study on the post-COVID-19 scenario of working conditions of media employees is also an interesting research area. Issues of employees working in private media organizations are more serious than those of working in state-run media organizations, which is another area to be explored.

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