Gendered Journalism: A Study of Gender Disparity in Select Newspaper Organisations of Kashmir

Heeba Din
Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir, J&K, India
Rabia Noor
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, J&K, India

Abstract

In the era of the third wave of feminism, the number of women journalists working in various states of India presents a startling paradox. Besides this, an unhealthy trend of ‘gendered’ journalism is emerging, wherein only ‘gendered’ or feminine news is assigned to female journalists. The current paper endeavors to find out if this trend of sharp disparity in the numbers and role of male and female journalists exist in the Kashmir-based press as well. It analyses hard and soft news stories published by leading regional English dailies. The analysis has been made in terms of various parameters like the ratio of male reporters to female reporters, beats assigned to women journalists, type and frequency of stories covered by them, and priorities of women journalists in terms of issues highlighted. The major purpose of the paper is to bring to fore what appears to be the culture of gender disparity in the regional press.

Keywords: Feminine News; Gender Disparity; Gendered Journalism; Kashmir; Women Journalists

Introduction

Journalism has come a long way. It has undergone drastic changes both in its meaning and practice. The word ‘journalism’ has been taken from a French journal, which in turn comes from Latin term ‘diurnal’ (Kundra, 2005) meaning ‘daily register’ or a ‘dairy’ – a book containing each day’s business or transactions. The word ‘journal’ also connotes a newspaper published every day or even less often or a magazine. Thus, journalism means the communication of information regarding the events of the day through written words, sounds or pictures (Pant & Kumar, 1995). As per Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (n.d.), journalism means ‘the collection and editing of the material of current interest for presentation, publication or broadcast.’ New Webster’s Dictionary defines journalism as the occupation of conducting a news medium, including publishing, editing, writing or broadcasting. David Wainwright defines journalism as the event of the day distilled into a few words, sounds or pictures, processed by the mechanics of communication to satisfy the human curiosity of a world that is always eager to know what is new (as cited in Pant & Kumar, 1995). People who communicate this information to masses are termed as journalists.

Journalism as a craft, a profession and even as trade or business is over two centuries old (Shamsi, 2005). News-oriented journalism was described by former Washington Post editor, Phil Graham, as “a first rough draft of history” because journalists often record important historical events as they are happening, but just the same, they must produce their news reports on short deadlines. Reporting journalism activities include stating what, when, where, who, why and how, famously quoted by Rudyard Kipling as ‘The Five Ws and One H’, which states the significance and effects of certain events or trends (Journalist Journal, 2008).

Journalism has frequently been referred to as a ‘masculine’ profession. However, over the years, this belief has received a severe battering as many women have left their mark in the field. Numerous proficient and courageous women journalists working across the globe have forced the humankind to change their notion of journalism. However, the Global Media Monitoring Project, ‘Who Makes the News?’ reveals that women makeup only 24 percent of the
people heard, read about or seen in the news, and this trend of underrepresentation has carried over from traditional news media to online outlets. Moreover, despite the growing numbers of women in the profession, they still have relatively little decision-making power inside media organizations (World Association for Christian Communication, 2010).

**Gendered Journalism**

Despite the changing trends in journalism, however, one thing that has not changed over the years is the ‘gendered’ view towards women journalists. No doubt women can be seen reporting shoulder to shoulder with men, covering wars, debating on political issues and covering the subjects that earlier were not believed to be their cup of tea. But the fact remains that women represent only 33 percent of the full-time journalism workforce across 59 nations as opposed to men taking two-thirds of the workforce (Byerly, 2011), thus highlighting the sharp gender disparity prevalent in media at present.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) that emerging from the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 was one of the first UN documents to highlight the critical importance of media in the attainment of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Section J of the BPfA focused attention on women and media as one of the twelve critical areas of concern for the advancement and empowerment of women. It stressed the need to “increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media as well as new technologies of communication”, and “promote balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media” (UNESCO, 2015a). Even as women can be seen coming out of the ‘pink ghetto’ where they have been expected to do stories defined by their gender, there are still layers of this ‘gendered’ journalism that is taking place even in the 21st century. Assigning glamorous and soft stories to women journalists, and typical hard news stories to male journalists indicate the gendered segregation that women journalists have to face every day.

A gender analysis of United Kingdom-based newspapers was conducted at City University London in 2012. The findings of the survey published in the shape of an article originally by an independent, not-for-profit media outlet The Conversation in 2012, and later by the web portal New Statesman in 2013, indicate a similar gender bias. The study that analyzed five national papers over seven days, during two separate weeks, a month apart reported that very few women have their presence in the areas like politics, sports, opinion writing, etc (Franks, 2013). Furthermore, the list of leading political reporters published by UK-based publication Press Gazette: Journalism Today in 2012 included only three women, who ranked 16, 36 and 39, further substantiating the sharp gender bias prevalent in today’s newsroom.

A similar trend can also be witnessed in other areas, which are considered to be the domain of men, for instance, sports. A survey conducted by International Sports Press in 2011 to analyze the sports coverage in 22 countries across 80 newspapers revealed that only a meager 8 percent of the articles were by women (Horky & Nieland, 2011).

**Indian Perspective**

The Indian print media currently include over 46,000 newspapers and periodicals; among them are more than 5000 dailies, nearly 17,000 weeklies, and 13,000 monthlies, and about 6000 fortnightlies and 3000 quarterlies. These are published in as many as 101 languages and dialects (Manorama Yearbook, 2002).
The largest number of publications are published in the Hindi language (nearly 19,000), followed by English (nearly 7000) and Urdu (nearly 3000). Forty-one Indian newspapers still being published in various languages are a century or elder. Daily newspapers in India are believed to enjoy a total circulation of 130 million copies, of which a lion’s share is accounted for by 200 big dailies. According to recent reports, the 350 largest newspapers are estimated to employ a total of about 5000 reporters, 2000 full-time correspondents, 5000 stringers and 5000 editorial staff (*Asian Media, Information and Communication Centre, 2002*).

As such, there is no proper data available on the number of women journalists in India. However, Pamela Bhagat’s report, ‘Status of Women Journalists in the Print Media’, commissioned by the National Commission for Women (NCW) in 2004, presents a disturbing picture of women journalists. The report is a part of a broader study on working women in India, executed by the Press Institute of India (PII) through empirical data that had been collected from almost all the states and union territories of the country. It approached 3,500 women journalists working for 141 newspapers and other publications in English as well as regional languages. The report suggests that many women journalists (even from established newspapers) work as daily wage labor, without an appointment letter, signing a muster roll at the end of the month to get merely 1,500 to 3000 rupees. Sushmita Malaviya, the media representative from Bhopal and part of the National Study Group (NSG), has been quoted as saying: “In Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, where media giants like Dainik Bhaskar and Nai Duniya flourish, there is no woman journalist, who has a permanent job. The ‘lucky’ ones are those on contract for two to three years.”

In the conflict-ridden north-eastern part of the country, only 35 women work as print journalists in seven states. Only 35 percent of these are full-time employees, whereas 40 percent say they have never been promoted (*India Together, 2004*). One of the leading national English dailies, The Hindu, reports that six major states and two union territories in India have zero female representation, which hints at the alarming levels of gender disparity in the field of journalism (*Ali, 2012*). In spite of much emphasis on women empowerment and prevention of women’s rights over the past century, there are still major imbalances and gaps that need to be addressed.

A qualitative study, titled ‘Conversations with Women Journalists in Small-Town India’, conducted by *The Women, Media and News Trust (2014)* reinforces the finding that Indian journalists usually belong to the Hindu upper castes. The study found that less than a fifth of editorial staff in four states of North India were females and even these were mostly upper caste Hindus with a sprinkling of Muslims. Dalits did not figure at all. The conditions, in which these women work, particularly those who are strangers in the district towns, are beyond imagination. They face innumerable hurdles because of gender bias, coupled with poor wages and lack of facilities including a poor transport network, lack of equipment, and lack of support from colleagues and seniors.

Women working in media do not only have to face sharp disparity in numbers, but the prevailing work culture too has not allowed them to come out freely from the clutches of gendered journalism. Women in India are still preferred to cover feminine issues, health, cookery and other soft stories. According to a study, ‘Status of Women Journalists in India’ conducted by Pamela Bhagat (2004), following are the main issues women journalists feel are major reasons for gendered journalism in India:
1. “More women are employed in the media now since they are available at lower salaries on the contract system. In such circumstances, gender fair reporting and practices are more difficult to promote.

2. After initial resistance, even women journalists start justifying organizational insensitivity. They are instrumental in perpetuating lack of recognition of women’s special needs and functions in society – childbirth, childcare, confinement, security after night duty etc. Many believe the myth that women journalists have limitations within organizations since they cannot do night shifts.

3. The regular dilemma is childcare vs. profession. Effect of work on marital relations differs between male journalists and women journalists.

4. Longer maternity leave is important since confinement and childcare are very demanding on health and emotions. This would usually be required once or twice in all working life so no big deal.

5. Women’s most productive years are also their reproductive years.

6. Women journalists are conscientious, diligent and people relate more easily to us. However, male bosses do not give credit for professionalism instead they speak of women exploiting their gender.

7. As a profession, very satisfying and stimulating but work environment needs to be egalitarian and encouraging. At present enthusiasm often watered down by unresponsive organizations that are not sensitive to gender-specific requirements which are often viewed as liabilities transport, maternity leave, childcare facilities, restrooms etc.

8. There is no transparency in policy matters entitlements, rights, and promotion criteria.”

Kashmir Perspective
In a conflict-hit region like Kashmir, the situation is even tougher for women journalists to carve out a niche in male-dominated newsrooms. The statistics released by the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) in 2012 indicate that Jammu and Kashmir have more than 700 registered daily and weekly newspapers with 381 in Urdu and 328 in the English language. Amid the increasing rise in the number of newspapers, the worrying trend remains that of the decreasing presence of female journalists in the regional press. Battling their confinement to feminine and soft stories, women journalists in Kashmir also have to face the cultural implications of the Valley.

Yet this politically contested piece of land has seen many woman journalists, who have engraved their mark in journalism. One such journalist is Aliya Nazki, who is presently working with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). She is the first female journalist from Kashmir to be awarded the best anchor by International Forum of Media Ethics and allied agencies of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). After attaining her basic education from Kashmir, she later studied International Relations in Delhi (Nagokay, 2013).

Another renowned name in the list is that of Nidhi Razdhan, a high-profile television journalist in India, who was born in a Kashmiri Pandit family. She is the prime-time anchor of one of the top national news channels, New Delhi Television (NDTV). She is also the daughter of Maharaj Krishan Razdan, the Editor in Chief of the Press Trust of India (Manchanda, 2011). Shahana Butt, Correspondent at Press TV, and Toufiq Rashid senior journalist working with Hindustan Times.
are among other examples of bold female journalists from this region, who have shattered the so-called ‘gendered’ view regarding women.

Even though the number of women joining the field is increasing over the years, the rampant trend on the ground is that most of women journalists either leave the field or work as part-time journalists or shift to other professions, thus decreasing the number of working women journalists in the Valley. After working for a good number of years as full-time reporters for local newspapers, many female journalists in Kashmir have later shifted to research and academics for various reasons. Gender discrimination at workplaces in the form of meager salaries, job insecurity, and lack of promotions, stability, and acknowledgment from the journalism fraternity in Kashmir are among the major factors responsible for Valley-based female journalists discontinuing journalism. Besides, social pressures have led to further deepen the gender disparity in the local press.

Objectives
1. To find out if gender disparity exists in the Kashmir-based press.
2. To analyze the nature of news stories covered by women journalists in Kashmir.
3. To assess the treatment given to female reporters’ stories by sample dailies.

Methodology
(a) Content Analysis
The objectives were achieved by the Content Analysis method. The units of analysis were hard and soft news stories published by sample dailies during the reference period. The analysis was made in terms of the ratio of stories done by male reporters to those by female reporters, nature and frequency of news stories covered by women journalists, and treatment given to them.

The nature of stories was analyzed to draw inferences about beats assigned to women journalists, type of stories covered by them and priorities of women journalists in terms of issues highlighted. The updates were analyzed and divided into various categories according to different beats like health, business, gender issues and so on. Other parameters were the placement of the stories and use of visual elements like pictures, illustrations, cartoons, and graphics to support the stories that helped to find out if local press deals seriously with women journalists’ stories.

(b) Sample
The study encompassed sample of four leading English dailies published from Kashmir, viz., Greater Kashmir, Rising Kashmir, Kashmir Monitor and Kashmir Times. The newspapers were selected for their circulation, frequency, and popularity.

Greater Kashmir is the first and the largest circulated English newspaper being published from Kashmir. From a weekly news tabloid in 1987, it has become a 20-page daily newspaper. The circulation of Greater Kashmir increased from 2,500 initially to 11,000 in 2000 to 50,000 at present (Greater Kashmir office, 2015). On the other hand, Rising Kashmir has emerged as one of the strongest competitors of Greater Kashmir in a short span of time (Noor, 2013). Kashmir Monitor was selected for being one of the fastest growing English dailies in Kashmir. Another sample newspaper was Kashmir Times, which is the oldest newspaper of J&K state with a total readership of two million. It reaches every corner of the state and several parts in the neighboring states of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi (Kashmir Times website, n.d.).
(c) Reference Period
The study covered a period of 15 days from August 1 to August 15, 2014. The period was selected to study the latest trends in reporting by women journalists in Kashmir.

Results and Discussion
Male-Female (Reporters) Ratio
During the analysis of 15-day coverage of sample dailies, it has been found that only a meager number of news stories are covered by women journalists for the regional press. The overall ratio of stories done by male reporters to those by female reporters is 99.1.
In case of Greater Kashmir, merely 0.1% of news stories have been reported by women journalists as compared to 99.9% news coverage by male reporters and news agencies and received in the form of press releases. The publication has carried 1020 hard and soft news stories during the reference period, of which just two stories have been covered by women journalists accounting for 0.1%.
Another daily, Rising Kashmir has carried 825 news stories. 15 of the stories have been covered by women journalists that accounts for 1.8% as compared to 810 stories done by male reporters and news agencies, and gathered through press releases, accounting for 98.2%.
Kashmir Monitor has published 990 news stories, of which a maximum number of stories (979) have been covered by male reporters and news agencies, and gathered through press releases that accounts for 99%. On the other hand, merely 11 stories have been covered by women reporters accounting for 1%.

In case of Kashmir Times, again just 1% of news stories have been covered women journalists as opposed to 99% news coverage done by male reporters and news agencies and received in the form of press releases. Kashmir Times has carried 11 stories done by women journalists during the reference period, whereas the overall news coverage by the publication is 990 news stories.

Beat Analysis
The analysis of beats reported by women reporters for the regional press shows that mostly soft beats like health, civic amenities, education, and culture and heritage are reported by them.
Women are hardly found to cover a political beat, which is considered to be the most important beat in mainstream media. Out of four dailies under study, only Rising Kashmir has been found to have assigned political stories to women journalists, the number of which, however, is very less as compared to those covered by male reporters. Overall 5 political events have been covered by women journalists for Rising Kashmir.
Greater Kashmir has carried only one story based on politics done by a female reporter. In other dailies viz., Kashmir Times and Kashmir Monitor, no political story has been covered by women journalists. Besides politics, conflict happens to be another important beat especially in case of state-based media; Kashmir being a conflict area. Despite this, however, only two stories pertaining to the conflict have been covered by a woman journalist for Kashmir Times, whereas other dailies do not seem to have assigned conflict beat to females. Kashmir Monitor has confined the reportage by women to only health and lifestyle stories. The information related to other beats is vivid from Table 1.
Table 1: Beat Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Greater Kashmir</th>
<th>Rising Kashmir</th>
<th>Kashmir Monitor</th>
<th>Kashmir Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Amenities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; Heritage</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type Analysis

The findings of the study reveal that women journalists mostly cover soft news stories, with *Rising Kashmir* being the only daily that appears to have assigned hard news too to female reporters. While in case of *Kashmir Monitor*, women journalists have contributed only soft stories, *Kashmir Times* has published one hard news story with a female reporter’s byline against 10 soft stories by women journalists during the reference period (Table 2).

Table 2: Type Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Greater Kashmir</th>
<th>Rising Kashmir</th>
<th>Kashmir Monitor</th>
<th>Kashmir Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard News</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft News</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Placement Analysis

The analysis reveals that stories covered by women reporters are mostly carried on inside pages. While *Greater Kashmir* and *Kashmir Monitor* have carried all the news stories covered by female reporters on inside pages, *Rising Kashmir* has published 5 out of 11 news stories done by females on front pages. *Kashmir Times* is the sole newspaper to give front page placement almost daily to stories covered by female journalists. Even though some of the stories have been published on front pages by two dailies, they mostly spread over one to two columns in space. No story by a female has been found to be the front page lead story, which is considered as the most important story in any edition (Table 3).

Table 3: Replacement Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Greater Kashmir</th>
<th>Rising Kashmir</th>
<th>Kashmir Monitor</th>
<th>Kashmir Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front Page</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside Page</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Treatment of Stories

The stories covered by women journalists for the Valley-based dailies have been found to have not been given any special treatment. On rare occasions, the stories are supported by pictures that mostly spread over one to two columns in space and rarely go beyond three columns. The stories lack other visual elements like illustrations, cartoons, and Infographics. *Greater Kashmir* has carried three thumbnails for one of the two stories covered by women journalists. Out of 14 stories carried by *Rising Kashmir*, seven are supported by photographs including thumbnails. In case of *Kashmir Monitor*, each story is supported by a picture, whereas no story carries a supporting visual in *Kashmir Times*. 
Some additional features that lend prominence to a story, viz., use of tags, colored background or a different font size than rest of the stories on the page, have also been lacking.

**Conclusion**

(a) **Gender Disparity**

The current study concludes that a sharp gender disparity exists in the regional press. The disparity is vivid from the ratio of the stories covered by male and female reporters, respectively, working for the regional press, which stands at a startling 99:1. The alarming trend of gendered journalism, whereby women are confined to covering feminine and soft stories, is prevalent in the leading newspapers.

(b) **Nature of News**

Women journalists mostly cover soft beats like health, civic amenities, education, environment, and culture and heritage. The beats that are deemed to be ‘serious’ in media are rarely covered by women reporters. The political beat is treated as the most important beat in mainstream media. As a policy, almost all the newspapers have adopted political reporting as the primary mandate of first-page coverage. In fact, the leading English newspapers of India cover political news the most (Murthy, Ramakrishna & Melkote, 2010). However, in Kashmir, women journalists are found to be assigned the political beat on rare occasions. Even though one of the sample dailies has been found to have assigned political stories to women journalists, the number of such stories, however, is very less as compared to those covered by male reporters. Conflict is another important beat as far as Kashmir is concerned, however, this beat too is covered by male journalists on most of the occasions.

The news stories are broadly classified as hard news stories and soft news stories. Whereas typically according to journalistic trends, hard news is given more preference because of its timeliness and immediacy; soft news tends to assume relatively lesser importance. The study concludes that women journalists mostly cover soft news stories, with hard news being assigned to female reporters on very rare occasions.

(c) **Treatment of Stories**

Placement of news plays a very crucial role in determining the importance of a news story. The stories published on front pages are treated more important than the stories carried on inside pages. The analysis reveals that stories covered by women reporters are mostly carried on inside pages. The leading newspapers give front page coverage to women’s stories very rarely, that too with no special treatment.

Treatment of a news story or presence of a visual element is an important indicator of the seriousness of a publication towards some particular content. However, the stories covered by women journalists for local dailies do not get any special treatment. On rare occasions, the stories are supported by pictures that mostly spread over one to two columns in space and rarely go beyond three columns.

Thus, the treatment given to stories done by female journalists reflects gender discrimination and the bias towards women journalists working in local newspapers. The amount of space given to stories covered by female reporters also points towards gender disparity in the local press.

**Recommendations**

The media continues to grow in India and women are increasingly making up a strong component of the industry. According to UNESCO’s report, ‘Inside the News: Challenges and
Aspirations of Women Journalists in Asia and the Pacific’ (UNESCO, 2015b), women are increasingly more educated than their male counterparts, yet they have to work as freelancers and in smaller organisations, while men work in full-time regular roles in large media houses. Women are taking on new media such as the online sphere to have their voices heard, while men remain in traditional roles such as television, radio, and newspapers.

As women attempt to overcome the challenges facing them, they are continuously confronted with obstacles that hamper their best efforts. Facilities such as childcare and maternity are only available to a minimal few, and the leave and re-entry schemes available for women after childbirth are average. Even though women genuinely want to work, their role as mothers’ works to their detriment. Even employers do not work to improve this situation, instead, they use it as an excuse to exclude women from the workforce. Decision-making positions too are out of reach for many women. Although some do make it to the top and there are incremental changes taking place, they are occurring too slowly for real change to be made.

Women form an important component in any profession. They have proved their mettle in all walks of life. Same goes for journalism. It is, thus, important to encourage women folk towards this profession. They need to be treated at par with their male counterparts so that more and more women can take up journalism as a career. Most importantly, they need to be taken seriously. Like their male counterparts, they too should be regularly assigned to cover the beats that are considered ‘serious’ and ‘important’ in media, like politics and conflict, besides soft beats. The placement and display of the stories should be determined by their merit rather than the gender of the reporter. Besides, there is a need to promote a healthy work culture in the newsrooms, so that women feel comfortable working at media offices.

Also, what needs to be looked at is the fact that there are significant differences in the situation of women journalists across the country. The growing number of women journalists in mainstream media or metropolitan media should not be taken as a precursor to the success of overcoming the gender inequality in media. Women in media do not only have to fight against the gender discrimination, but also have to fight the patriarchal system, which doesn’t allow them to choose a career of their own liking. As Joseph (2002) suggests, the increasing visibility of women on television and in the indigenous English language print media – generally known as the mainstream or national press because of its unique reach and influence – should not be mistaken as gender equality in media. Women presenting news on Indian television may suggest that there are no more impediments in women’s path to the top of the editorial pyramid. But many female journalists still experience slow and limited progress, if not total stagnation, in their careers. And the existence of a glass ceiling, which currently keeps women from occupying the very top spots in the editorial hierarchy (of newspapers in particular), is widely acknowledged, even by women who have reached relatively high positions within their news organizations.

Positive action is needed to overcome direct and indirect discrimination at work. Media should conduct self-initiated but independent gender assessments of their organizations, including pay audits to determine pay gaps and differences in employment conditions and contracts. Such audits should guarantee anonymity, be transparent and participatory and acted upon with appropriate strategies. Media companies should strongly consider implementing affirmative employment strategies to target more women in areas of media, where there is obvious and apparent male domination, particularly in decision-making roles at executive and senior, and middle editorial levels. Affirmative action is also required in newsrooms and other sections of media houses to ensure the mentoring of junior women professionals. Besides, it is
important to support and encourage women from disadvantaged classes, castes, and ethnic groups as well as women in regional, remote and conflict-ridden areas.

As such, in order to make journalism or media today free from any kind of gender bias, a wholesome approach needs to be taken. Gender sensitization for both men and women should be taken up. Proper gender training should be given to both men and women; men to overcome the gender bias and women to break out of the years of patriarchal mental setup. Proper working conditions should be provided according to needs of women employees. One of the major factors contributing to women opting out from the field of journalism is because of the domestic responsibilities women have to shoulder as a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. Therefore, there is a dire need to have child care facilities available for women employees in media offices.

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**Corresponding author**

Dr. Rabia Noor can be contacted at: rabia.kajal@gmail.com

**Author biography**

**Heeba Din** currently is a Doctoral Scholar in the Media Education Research Centre in the University of Kashmir. She has been a Gold Medallist in M.A Mass Communication & Journalism. Having worked as a staff writer for “Youth Ki Awaaz”- India’s largest online Platform for Youth; she undertook the role of researcher at the Human Rights Law Network- A collective of Lawyers and Social Activists. She is presently working on her Doctoral thesis and has a number of research publications in national and international journals to her credit. Her current field of specialization and interests are New Media, Comic Journalism and Cultural Studies. Her research work includes understanding the role of Music in Conflict, studying the...
visual power of iconic images, the portrayal of the third gender in Bollywood and gender disparity in the local press in Kashmir.

Heeba has qualified the National Eligibility Test (CSIR/UGC) and was served as Guest Lecturer at the Media Department, Government College for Women, Maulana Azad Road, Srinagar. She is also the recipient of the Kashmir Times Shamim Ahmed Shamin Memorial Award for professional work and academic excellence in 2015. Heeba has also worked as an Assistant Director in the movie “Tamaash” which won the special jury mention at the National Film awards in 2013.

Rabia Noor, Ph.D., is an academician and an independent journalist. She is serving as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST). She is also the Editor of IUST’s campus newspaper. She has pursued her Ph.D., M.Phil and Master’s degrees in Mass Communication and Journalism from Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir. Her specialization includes news reporting, news editing, print journalism and business reporting. A journalist-turned-journalism mentor, she has 12 years of combined experience in journalism, teaching, and research. She has worked as a correspondent with an English daily, Greater Kashmir, for six years. She was awarded the prestigious fellowship for female journalists, Sanjoy Ghose Fellowship (2007-’08) by Charkha Development Communication Network. Recently, she was selected for the National Foundation for India (NFI) fellowship and National Media Award, 2018. Dr. Rabia has highlighted diverse issues through her writings since 2005. She has written extensively on business, politics, conflict, human rights, health, education, gender issues and various aspects of the society. She has to her credit many national and international publications. She has authored a book titled ‘Business Leaders of Kashmir: A Series of Success Stories’ and some monographs.