

# Work and Life of Women Journalists: A Study with Special Reference to Kerala

Priyanka Rajeev, Midhila.M.S, Karthika.C

**Abstract:** *In today's fast paced and media driven life, journalism has indeed emerged as a fascinating domain in media studies. In the present scenario more and more youngsters gets flaunted into this profession. In the modern world, women play an integral role in the development of journalism and the rising women community showcases the scientific and technical advancements in the industry. Some have chosen Journalism as a passion to focus on investigative reporting, covering human rights violations, corruption, and some social causes. Journalism demands journalists risk their lives by putting themselves in different context like war, and natural disasters like flood and conflict. Reporting about serious issues like corruption, political turmoil and human right violation may end up by making the journalists the foes of the rich and powerful in the society. Conventionally, journalism is considered as amale dominated profession and hence women who undertake this job encounter tremendous criticisms and gender inequalities from their colleagues and the society. This paper aims to discuss the gender discrimination and inequality bestowed on a female journalist in the media field. The paper examines the physical challenges faced by women journalists and focuses on their security issues and legal supports demanded by them. This paper brings out the wage issues and psychological problems faced by the female media professionals, with special reference to the state of Kerala. Quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis are adopted to derive a valuable outcome on the problems and issues imposed on women journalists in Kerala. Media Ethics and values are also noted with special reference to the views of the media experts in order to make the study more meaningful. The paper points out the inevitable need in enhancing the legal system in order to provide a safe ground for the aspiring women in the country. By motivating them, we motivate the nation.*

**Keywords:** *Gender, Wage, Security, Sexual and psychological harassment.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Information is powerful in the modern society. Ours is an age of information. There is a saying that media makes the man. "Journalism is defined as the art and science of using words for the communication of news items." (Robert schmuh, the responsibilities of journalism, affiliated east west).

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Today as a result of the digital revolution people prefer internet as their primary source of information rather than television or paper, to the internet when the internet began to have a strong presence in the world of new media.

In the mid nineteenth century, traditional media techniques were used by the media professionals to collect and send information from one part of the world to the other. But in the digital era the camera creates photographs of people and events that gives the reader more information. Indian journalism is older than 230 years. Missionary works and freedom struggle are the important things helped the growth of Indian journalism. The first paper Bengal gazette was totally a one man show, James Augustus Hickey played the roles of editor ,printer and promoter. Indian journalists fought for social evils like sathi, n childmarriage and untouchability. Pioneer of indian journalism Raja Ram Mohan Roy started a Bengali weekly "samvadkaumudi". It's objective was to remove sathi system from india. Many news papers were published in the 19th century, a time during which a miraculous development of Indian newspapers can be noted.

During the period of British raj, India showed drastic social changes including the education of women. Within a short time the women education became as important as the men's. Many of the young female faces started revolutionary writing for newsletters during the freedom movement. Homai Vyarawalla was India's first women photo journalist. She ventured through the development of the camera as a specialized advancement. Her political photographs includes the struggling period of independence and it is stamped forever in public memory. Prabha Dutt, started her training with Hindustan times, but after her training the editor said that the newspaper organization didn't employ women. But they changed the rule and included her. She became the first women chief reporter of a national daily. Few of the women faces reached the top of the pyramid, they were sufficiently qualified and have long track records and have done some wonderful work.

The growth opportunities for women in the media are available. Women have already achieved top positions but women in the south Asian media, which include India, have not gained a smooth one. In India, female journalists meet a lot of barriers and obstacles. But in Malayalam media women face strong challenges in their profession to reach a higher position. Veteran journalist Leela Menon considered a trailblazer for her exclusive stories. She was an extremely daring journalist and had a tremendous sense of news. Veena George is another famous figure among the female journalists in Kerala.



She is at the peak of her professional life being the first woman executive editor of a Malayalam news channel.

In India male female ratio is favorable to female. The media is also known as the fourth pillar of the government machineries – the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. But the women journalists are facing many challenges in their profession. The news are constantly reported from the male point of view. In other ways, every news story or investigation reports is highly male dominated and showcases the patriarchal mind set. Today, in most of the news rooms of Kerala, people who head media organization or edit news stories are men. Women reporters in most Indian dailies are doing night duty which is a disadvantage for the women. It is not safe for the female journalists to do night duties as they'll have to go home at ridiculous hours of the morning. The TarunTejpal case of sexual harassment of a female colleague is still fresh on the pages of every print media in the country to be able to easily wipe. The media discussed silently about the harassment of women at their offices. Indian working women often face sexual harassment from their colleagues. Other serious problem faced by the female journalists is the gender discrimination at work places while assigning beat, stories and promotion for higher posts. Journalism historically has been considered a male profession and hence women often encounter with lots of criticisms and harassments. Journalism is a conclusive profession in our society which many of the youngsters wish to pursue. It is the dream of many women to build a golden career in this field.

This paper aims to discuss the gender discrimination and inequality of female journalists in the media field. The paper also notes the physical challenges faced by the female journalists and extend its focus on the security issues and legal supports that they require. The study also brings out the wage issues and the psychological problems faced by the female media professionals with a special reference to the state of Kerala. Kerala is a state of media literacy but female media professionals are struggling in their news rooms. The paper is concluded by highlighting the need for enhancing the legal system for women journalists and suggestions to bring the marginalized community to the frontline.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

International Women Media Foundation (2010) conducted a survey on "Global report on the status of women in the news media" larger part of the news coverage workforce crosswise over districts was found in the two word related dimensions most intently connected with routine news social event, composing and altering. The lesser expert dimension was observed to be male-commanded, with almost 66% (63.9%) of the positions held by men, contrasted with ladies (36.1%). Men fall nearly three-fourths (73.2%) of the employments in the specialized proficient dimension, with ladies a little more than a fourth (26.8%). This activity classification incorporates camera, sound and lighting faculty – employments essentially connected with the generation of communicate news. Measurably, this finding is noteworthy. The sex design indicated by this finding is clear: This gathering of occupations is commonly held by men in every one of the 7 areas with the exception of Sub-

Saharan Africa, where people are genuinely near equality. In that area, a few countries (e.g., Namibia, Zimbabwe) have almost equivalent quantities of ladies and men in this activity class. Men around 66% (65.6%) of the creation and configuration employments, with ladies just a third (34.4%). This classification incorporates illustrations planners, picture takers, artists, closet fashioners and others in the innovative jobs of news creation. This study demands that the field of journalism male domination is still alive. The technical part of media men is more active than women. but some exceptions denoted in this study, some countries have nearly equal numbers of women and men in this job category. But they nothing that women's participation in very less in the news production.

In the article A Study on the "Problems faced by Women Journalists" noted that Kanyika Shaw (2013) "Thai female journalists had become assimilated into the journalistic workforce, in terms of salary, education, working conditions, and that they need no longer be regarded as a separate group. Most of the female journalists have faced some kinds of discrimination such as verbal harassment, prejudice from news sources."

Akhileshwari, (1990) "Female work participation in India is among the lowest in the world. The number of women in the electronic media is dramatically higher than in the print media, averaging 30-40 per cent- a figure that no editorial room of a newspaper can boast of media-market on one hand has expanded opportunities for women but the kind of beats or job 'are assigned to women journalists is to keep them confined to soft-beats like handling feature writing or shallow writings."

Exploring the salience of gender in the working lives of women journalists ROSS (2001) "proposed the gender was important in the newsroom for some women but no other and that its impact is often felt in negative ways in her study on women at work: Journalism as En-Gendered practice in journalism studies (Vol-2 Issue 4 Nov)-data from a small scale postal survey of members of British network of women journalists. Journalists pointed out some problems associated with working an industry of male dominated. Such as low priority given to coverage of women's issues and the male oriented culture which can be hostile to women with family responsibilities. Most of the women surveyed believe that more women in decision – making position would have a positive impact on developing a more women – friendly news agenda. These are the significant ambiguities about the salience of gender determining a specifically engendered journalistic practice."

A 2014 report of a global survey by international news safety institute conducted among nearly 1000 female journalists revealed that nearly two thirds of them had experienced violence in the work place, taking in the form of intimidation threats or abuse in their work.

ROSALIND GILL (2013) in his book "Gender and the media" noted that early feminist media critique came from a number of different sources.



The critique came from women who worked with in journalism or broadcasting and were concerning about the lack of opportunities for women working within the media. They argued that the lack of interesting fictional roles, the absence of female news readers, and the poor representation of women within senior media position had a profound impact upon how women were seen in society as a whole.”

GABRIEL ARANA (2015) through the article “ A mental – health epidemic in the newsroom” says that “A 2001 study found that upwards of 85 percent experience work-related trauma. Other research shows that 4 to 28 percent suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder over the course of their careers, and up to 20 percent experience depression.” Even when psychological symptoms like nightmares, flashbacks, insomnia and anxiety don’t rise to the level of a disorder, they still take a toll. Those covering natural disasters or war are not the only ones who suffer. “It turns out that almost all journalists are exposed to traumatic-stress experiences Gabriel Arana in 2015 A mental- health Epidemic in the newsroom stated that Elana Newman, a professor of psychology at the University of Tulsa who studies journalism and trauma. That includes reporters experiencing trauma secondhand; and freelancers who weather the hazards of the profession without traditional organizational supports.

ROWENNA DAVIS (2013) “According to the survey released by campaigning group women in journalism it is found that 74% of news journalists in national are men and also men dominate in political and business journalism and it is only 3% of the women in sports journalism. It is clear from the study that women are less likely to be in senior positions. Eight out of the top 10 newspapers having almost twice as many male editors as women editors. That gender divide penetrates the whole newspaper industry with women making up

PANDAY (2011) according to Panday’s work Still a Male Preserve, Women in Bangladeshi News Industry, “Reporting: Why Are Women Not Coming?” most of the newspaper offices and media rooms are not women friendly; for example, some media institutions do not provide separate toilet for women. Panday noted that “since women are dwarfed by a dominated male presence, they feel like fish out of water and intimidated by their colleagues.”

AIFAZ.A (1998), in his viewpoint about women participation in media that in Dhaka, have 116 dailies,370 weekly,129 fortnightly and 270 monthly newspapers are circulating. Among this 1500 journalists are working. These are publishing in Bangla and English. In these the women journalists are very less only 60 women media professionals are working. It is only 4% of the total strength.

### III. THEORITICAL FRAME WORK AND METHODOLOGY

LauraMulvey’s feminist theory argues against the 1950s’ concept of a perfect housewife which stereotypes women as passive and submissive, with an hourglass figure, and as attractive to their husbands. On the basis of Mulvey’s argument, Linda Steiner put forward her Feminist Media Theory. In this study, the feminist media theory was used to analysis and actuality existing in the media industry in

Kerala. The viewpoint was the empowerment of female journalists in all field of their profession.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis are used in the research. Qualitative analysis is done by conducting an in-depth interview to understand the real life experience of a female journalist. Quantitative analysis is done by organizing a survey (purposive sampling) to understand the work and life of female journalists in the media industry of Kerala. The questions are structured to find out the work environment issues, unequal treatment at work, legal support, life work balance issues faced by female journalists of Kerala.

### IV. OBJECTIVES

- To find out the gender discrimination and the inequality to female journalists in the media profession.
- To discuss the physical challenges faced by female journalists.
- To find out the wage issues, psychological problems of the female media professionals.
- To find out the legal support systems working in media industry.

### V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the challenges that female journalists face in their professional work?
- Is there any gender discrimination in the media house and news production?
- What kind of physical and psychological issues are faced by a women journalist?
- What kind of legal systems to enhance the female media profession?

### VI. HYPOTHESIS

- Women journalists face both physical and psychological challenges in the media profession.
- They know about the legal systems to enhance them but they couldn’t get support from the institution.
- Female media professionals facing gender discrimination in the news production.

### VII. RESEARCH DESIGN

In depth interview conducted with journalist Saritha Varma Asst.editor of Indian express newspaper and the former club reporter of the stateman. The researcher conducted in depth interview by using telephonic. Purposive sampling used in the research. 50 women journalists who also work in different post of departments. They were selected from various media such as print, television, radio, news portals, and so on.



VIII. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Women journalists face both physical and psychological challenges in the media profession.

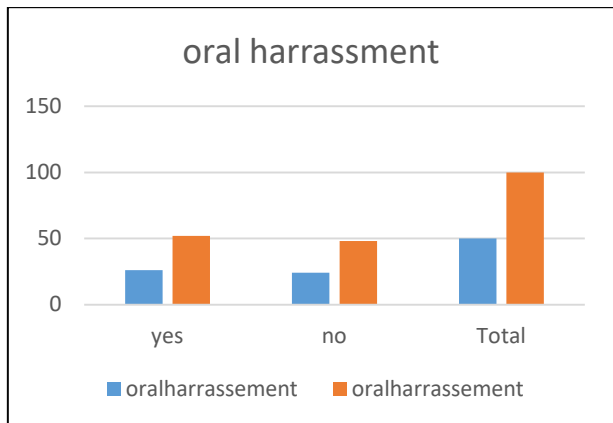


Fig. 1 Distribution of Oral Harassment Faced By Female Journalists.

The chart 1. shows the distribution of oral harassment faced by female journalists with the highest valid frequency of 26 and the lowest valid frequency of 24.

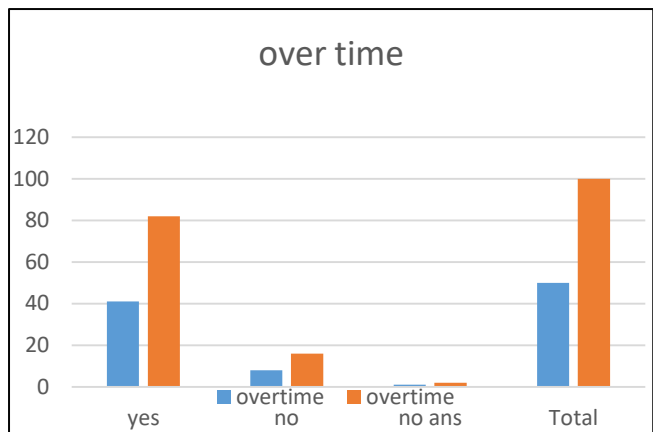


Fig. 2 Distribution of Over Time Work

The chart 2. shows the distribution of overtime work with the highest valid frequency of 41 and the lowest valid frequency of 8.

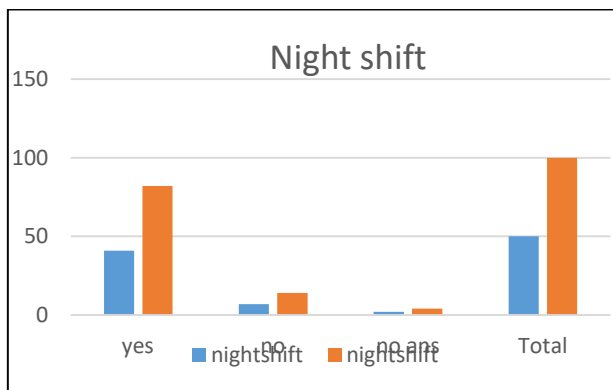


Fig. 3 Distribution of Working In Night Shift

The chart 3. shows the distribution of working night shift with the highest valid frequency of 41 and the lowest valid frequency of 7.

Table. 1

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
daycare	50	.9800	.24661	.03488		
One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference		
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
				Lower	Upper	
daycare	-.573	49	.569	-.02000	-.0901	.0501

**Test Value:** The number we entered as the test value in the One-Sample T Test window.

**T Statistic:** The test statistic of the one-sample *t* test, denoted *t*. In this example, *t* = -.573 Note that *t* is calculated by dividing the mean difference (E) by the standard error mean (from the One-Sample Statistics box).

**df:** 49 The degrees of freedom for the test. For a one-sample *t* test, *df* = *n* - 1; so here, *df* = 50-1

**Sig. (2-tailed):** The two-tailed p-value corresponding to the test statistic.

**Mean Difference:** The difference between the "observed" sample mean (from the One Sample Statistics box) and the "expected" mean (the specified test value (A)). The sign of the mean difference corresponds to the sign of the *t* value (B). The positive *t* value 1.

**Confidence Interval for the Difference:** The confidence interval for the difference between the specified test value and the sample mean.

Since *p* < 0.001, we reject the null hypothesis and concluded that 0.569 > 0.001

We reject the null hypothesis that the two-tailed p value is greater than the positive test value.

They know about the legal systems to enhance them but they could not get the support from the institution.



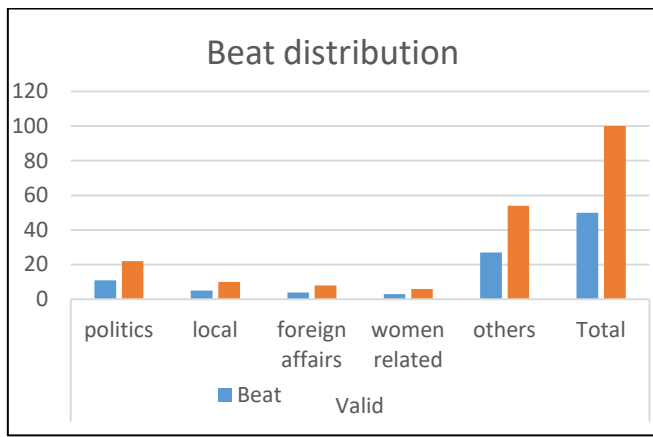


Fig. 4 Distribution of Assigning Beat

The chart 4. shows the distribution of assigning beat with the highest valid frequency of 27 and the lowest valid frequency of 3.

Table. 2

same\_position\* salary\_difference Crosstabulation

		salary_difference			Total	
		yes	no	no ans		
same_position	yes	Count	7	25	0	32
		Expected Count	7.7	23.7	.6	32.0
	no	Count	4	12	0	16
		Expected Count	3.8	11.8	.3	16.0
	no ans	Count	1	0	1	2
		Expected Count	.5	1.5	.0	2.0
Total	Count	12	37	1	50	
	Expected Count	12.0	37.0	1.0	50.0	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.186 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	9.969	4	.041
Linear-by-Linear Association	.046	1	.830
N of Valid Cases	50		

6 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .04.

The key result in the Chi-Square Tests table is the Pearson Chi-Square.

The value of the test statistic is 26.186<sup>a</sup>

The footnote for this statistic pertains to the expected cell count assumption (i.e., expected cell counts are all greater than 5): no cells had an expected count less than 5, so this assumption was met.

Because the test statistic is based on a 3x2 cross tabulation table, the degrees of freedom (df) for the test statistic is  $df=(R-1) * (C-1) = (3-1) * (3-1) =2*2=4$

Female media professionals facing gender discrimination in the news production.

Table. 2 conflicts \* SHPCommittee Crosstabulation

		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square		27.237 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio		11.030	4	.026
Linear-by-Linear Association		.714	1	.398
N of Valid Cases		50		

Chi-Square Tests

Count		SHPCommittee			Total
		Yes	No	No Ans	
conflicts	yes	20	12	0	32
	no	13	3	1	17
	no ans	0	0	1	1
Total		33	15	2	50

The corresponding p-value of the test statistic is  $p = .000$  5 cells (55.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .04.

The key result in the Chi-Square Tests table is the Pearson Chi-Square. The value of the test statistic is 27.237<sup>a</sup>

The footnote for this statistic pertains to the expected cell count assumption (i.e., expected cell counts are all greater than 5): no cells had an expected count less than 5, so this assumption was met.

Because the test statistic is based on a 3x2 cross tabulation table, the degrees of freedom (df) for the test statistic is  $df=(R-1) * (C-1) = (3-1) * (3-1) =2*2=4$

The corresponding p-value of the test statistic is  $p = .000$

IX. DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of the research was to explore the challenges faced by women media professionals in Kerala on the basis of personal and professional challenges imposed on them. The study also found that, the females, face harsh harassments in their working environment and it also focuses on how the legal system support the female media professionals.



Myself as a researcher, conducted in depth interview with journalist Saritha Varma, Asst. editor of Indian Express Newspaper and the former club reporter of The Statesman. In her telephonic interview she said that women media professionals face several problems in their life due to the work, overtime schedules and travel issues. They are not able to maintain work-life balance due to the same reasons. In the work front they are categorized as secondary. She also pointed out that, as a woman she still faces gender harassment more than that of sexual harassment. The notion of gender equality is well accepted by the society today, but there are many who judge these so called 'stigmas on gender equality' with their blurred visions and irrational perceptions. As a pioneer, she was dropped from challenging assignments only because of her woman tag and many thought herself to be incapable and insufficient in executing such serious issues.

She also talked about the legal committee which was formed recently after the issue of honey trap. Sugathakumari is the chairperson of the committee and it works for analyzing the problems of women media professionals. Saritha Varma also put forward some suggestions for the upliftment of women journalists such as restroom facilities, maternity leave and providing awareness about sexual harassment, protection committee and its urgency in today's world.

Media was a male dominated industry, and when women started joining this field, the male category was not able to tackle with them. At the same time some, consider female workers as the object of their satisfaction. In media, women are always turned down for the challenging missions. Media is not an organized industry as it is a private sector and all these lead to male domination.

Women journalists face both physical and psychological challenges in their profession. In the sample data set, a question was asked about oral harassment to which there were three answer choices: yes, no, and no response. Most of the respondents said that they faced Oral harassments in the working place. The sample data set, also collected data about nightshifts and overtime duty of women media professionals, most of them working in this schedule. It is proved that physical and psychological challenges are common with women media professionals with reference to the frequency test. Panday P.K (2011) in his article "Reporting why are women not coming?" pointed out the fact that newspapers and media rooms are not women friendly; and it is crystal clear from the conditions of some media institutions that they do not provide even the basic facilities like separate toilet and rest rooms for women. This article also proved the hypothesis and indeed showcases a comparative study of the physical and psychological challenges faced by the women community with reference to the sample T test. It is not proved in this research but null hypothesis is not rejected. We conclude that there is no enough evidence to suggest an association between physical and psychological challenges between the day care facilities.

In the sample data set women were asked about the assigning beat and it was found that important beats are handled by a small number of women journalists. It proved that women media professionals face discrimination in news production through the frequency test. The study aimed

to analyze the problem of equality by questioning the female professionals about whether their counterparts working with them have the same job position and have they felt any salary difference between male and female in the media field using a Chi Square Test of Independence. Hence, the gender discrimination faced by the women workers in this field is proved. Feminist analysis of violence has been related to power, between the men and women, that contradict equal access to power and resources, thereby making them vulnerable to the cruelty from men. The reason for this violence can be due to the imposition of 'patriarchy' in our society. The basic ideology of male domination executed by the male chauvinists in our society, strikingly overrules the women's life significantly. (A situational analysis of domestic violence against women in Kerala, 2005)

They know about the legal systems to enhance them, but they couldn't get support from the institution. In 2004, the International news safety institute, released a global survey report and it discussed about the work experience of thousand female journalists and the reports revealed that, nearly two thirds of them had experienced violence in the work place, or they have faced abuses in their working environment. It also throws light on the notion that female media professionals are not aware about legal system and they don't get support from their institution. In the sample data set, the researcher analyzed the questions, 'do you face any conflict in the working environment and do you have any knowledge about sexual harassment protection committee in your organization' using a Chi Square Test of Independence. The hypothesis is proved.

## X. CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to explore the hardships faced by women media professionals in Kerala on the personal and professional front. The findings of the study reveals that the media is the platform of gender discrimination. Kerala, is no exception to it. It is a clear reflection of the attitude of a society that portrays women only as a house wife and a mother. It's not solely the problem of the media profession; it is there in all other work field around the world. Media was a male dominated industry and when women started joining the industry, males were not able to tackle with them. They categorized females as secondary and treated them as the objects of satisfaction. Women are facing gender inequalities in the news production. They have been dropped from challenging works, and this stratagem was done to prove the women's incapability of doing work. Media organizations should ensure gender equality and should provide equal opportunities to remove the hindrance. Many of the media industries reject women at the time of recruitment. The management will decide the ratio of the male and female workers. They need to arrange special facilities for them, ensure security and provide maternity leave as the work - life balance is pointed as the main reason. The gender disparities are very much visible in the media profession. Women is working as inferior and submissive.



In addition to that men harasses and exploits their female colleagues. As female journalists face many a lot of problems like these, the industry and their family should try to understand them better and should encourage them to pursue their dream career. The media and legal systems should also provide a better employment space for women journalists thus encouraging their growth.

## XI. LIMITATIONS

The survey is conducted on very small sample size. The study population is very small. The female journalists are very much biased while filling this questionnaire. The research only focused the opinions of female journalists didn't information from male journalists. The study is conducted only in Kerala but collecting data from other parts of the country can add further de fail to the research.

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