



GENDER EQUALITY IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA- ANALYSING SOCIAL MINDSET

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to explore the struggle of women journalists in field of electronic journalism. The study examine various aspects of women employment including their nature of work, perception of society, journalists' individual experiences and choices towards their career and family life. Media industry is today driven by expertise, power of decision making, sense of understanding and responsibility towards time and society. As women have great sense of responsibility and emotions, they can now be seen in war zones, doing conflict reporting and handling their families as well. But their minimal number in the industry continues to be a cause of concern. The reasons may include their personal priorities, career aspirations and level of adjustments for the profession.

Keywords: Gender, Media, Social mindset, Decision Making and Gender Equality

Introduction

It has been a long journey for women journalists to break the glass-ceiling in this field which was mainly dominated by male media professionals earlier. Reason being, it was considered as a profession which requires a lot of field work. Today when we see more number of women journalists in the field, it does not assure that the situation of women journalist has improved or the social mind set has changed in terms of gender bias. The increasing number of women journalists does

not imply better status of women in the society at large. There are so many factors hidden under several layers but their reflection can easily be seen on the progress of women working in the media industry in comparison to their male colleagues. Sectors like healthcare or media requires 24x7 services of its employees to cater to the needs of their target customers. With the additional responsibility of taking care of their respective households, women employees have put in double the effort in managing both their career and household. After eight or nine hour's long shift in office, they land into another world of domestic responsibilities where things are waiting for them and thus, begin the second shift for them. Willingly or otherwise they have to take care of the domestic responsibilities as most of the time there is no alternative. There are very few families where men lend an equal shoulder to the domestic responsibility along with the women.

Methodology

This research paper is exploratory in nature and examines the mindset of main segments in media industry that includes women and men journalists. The Data and content for the research paper were gathered from secondary published sources including books, newspapers, Journals, websites and research studies.



Women and Media

Any discussion about women in media will be incomplete without taking in to consideration the viewpoint of male members of this profession. In our male dominant society the concept of duties and role of women is defined by the dominating group only. In earlier times women used to take lead in every aspect of household but unfortunately the process of gender development has happened in the reverse manner. Now a day we ourselves modern people but we are not giving equal respect which is due to the half population of the society. Being the best carrier of new ideas, thoughts, information and opinions, the role of media becomes very crucial in the society. It has the power to influence the thought process of people. Especially electronic media can contribute a lot in the process of development of a society. It can effectively portray positive or negative factors prevailing in the society. It has played a great role in disseminating awareness about women's issues. Shining examples of this role played by the electronic media are very powerful campaigns related to dowry system, domestic violence and sexual harassment which directly leave an impact on the viewers. However there is another aspect of media in which women are still portrayed as an object. Whether a product is related to male or female, the advertisement will include a woman and this is sometimes considered offensive by women. This sort of mind set also affects the women who are part of media industry.

Social Mindset Towards Women

According to the current picture women are being hired on the senior posts, doing field work and covering crucial beats in electronic

media. The social norms for each gender also play a crucial role here. If a male reporter pays a visit to a politician's place late evening to get some exclusive news or to make good rapport with his source, it is seen as a normal practice in journalism. But if a woman journalist does the similar thing then questions are raised directly on her character. It is a very unfortunate attack on a person's dignity and an effort to undermine all the hard work and professional skills only on the basis of gender. People who are insecure or not happy with the emerging role of women have actually always expected women to do household work and take care of children and home. They try to find excuses to place themselves on a superior pedestal than woman with gender biased reasons. Mutual understanding and sharing of information is one of the basic principles in electronic media. One has to follow the underlined concept of information sharing. It has been noticed that male journalists do not share information with their female colleague in a bid to scuttle their chances of growth in the cut throat competitive environment of news media industry. For a determined female journalist it takes a lot of effort to gather news and information and create a niche for them in the male dominated profession.

Life of Women Journalist

Electronic media as a profession is different from any other profession due to several factors such as odd working hours, 24/7 nature of the news industry and cut throat competition. Extensive field work demands a lot of time and efforts to deliver the desired results and deal with the difficult situations during coverage of new events. In such situations women obviously have to walk an



extra mile extra as they have other important responsibilities at the domestic front in addition to those at the work place. A male reporter can immediately head out for an out station assignment without any hesitation as he does not have to worry about responsibilities at domestic front such as taking care of the children, preparing meal for the family and sending kids to the school. In a normal family these all and many more such tasks are responsibilities of a woman. So if at the work place she is asked to go outstation to cover some news event then she will have to first take in to account her duties at the domestic front which will be severely affected in her absence as there is no alternative or replacement to take care of these tasks. It is very unfortunate and disturbing fact that even today the society does not recognise the efforts of a working woman, especially a woman journalist who carves a niche for herself on the basis of her sheer talent and hard work. Work – life balance is defined as a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both job and personal life are equal (Vijay Mani, 2013). Despite all the problems faced by the women workforce and not much empathy for them in the society, there are some inspiring stories as well of those women who managed to strike that illusive work – life balance. Senior Cameraperson in DD News, Jaya Shree is one such inspirational case. Apart from being a well known female cameraperson of the country, she is also equally successful at the domestic front by devoting much needed attention to her family. She has carved a niche for herself in the male dominated camera sector of the media Industry on the basis of her dedication and hard work. She covers almost all news events involving the top political leadership of the

country. She gives the credit of her successful career to her determination and support of her family.

Current Role of Women Journalists

Women can now be seen working in almost every department of a news channel, be it production, engineering, camera, anchoring, reporting, editing or graphics. Every year, a new lot of young journalists enter the field of media with a lot of aspirations but only few of them survive the cut throat competition. With a limited number of opportunities available it is very difficult for a journalist to achieve a remarkable position in the organization. Some may argue that male journalists also have a number of responsibilities which they have to take care of at the domestic front and put in equal amount of hard work at the work place. However there is a stark difference between the two scenarios. A male journalist does not have to bother about a lot of factors unlike their female counterparts. He can stay in the field to cover an event or news till late in the night without being concerned about the safety and security issue and does not have to seek permission or explain the situation to his family members every time such a situation occurs. But in case of a female, howsoever successful she might be in her professional life, it is imperative for her to take care of the domestic responsibilities even after a long day at work. There has been a steady increase in the number of women journalists joining the electronic media industry but most of them are confined to covering beats like entertainment, social welfare, women and child development or weather reports. Apart from journalists, women in other departments of electronic media industry such as camera and technical wings have also done exceptionally well.



However despite all these efforts put in by the women to bring them at par with their male colleagues, the number of women employees remains less than that of male employees thereby exposing the hollowness of gender equality in the electronic media industry.

Conclusion

In today's modern times women are making a lot of efforts to overcome the hurdles, prove their mettle and change the prevalent perceptions about the fair gender. The path to gender equality however is not easy and they have to face a lot of discrimination at all levels both at work and domestic fronts. Based upon the analysis, the hypothesis is rejected as women are carving their new path of success and prosperity. This has to be kept in mind that behind the success of working women, role of their hard work and determination is much higher than the coming change in societal mindset towards women. A woman is expected to devote equal amount of time to her responsibilities both at workplace and at home. Meanwhile a man generally faces no such pressure and can easily go about devoting that extra time at work in order to prove his worth to the organisation. The situation gets complicated further when a woman does not have any support system at domestic front to fall back upon in case she needs to make some extra effort at the workplace. The role of the organisation becomes more crucial here wherein some sort of support system is provided to those working women who wants to walk that extra mile but are dragged behind due to their domestic responsibilities. Facilities such as crèche for looking after children, flexible working hours and a robust policy to tackle the issues of harassment etc can go a long way in

augmenting a women employee's trust in the organisation and motivating her to give her best performance. The society will also have to change its outlook towards the working women and lend a helping hand to them to bridge the gender gap at workplaces. Both partners working a steady job have become a norm in our society now thereby increasing the pressure on women employees to strike a balance between work and home. More research is needed to gain additional insight in to meaning and consequences of such demanding situations and understand how can the work – home interface be managed more effectively to enhance the quality of life.

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