

Exploring Historical Challenges Faced by Women in Journalism and Solutions for Equal Participation

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Abstract: *Women journalists are often overlooked in studies of journalism from a gender perspective. The purpose of this analysis is to explore the current state of women's professional development in global journalism, historically trace the origins of marginalization of female journalists and propose strategies for achievement of gender equality in the industry. In particular, this article will explore the challenges faced by women in realizing equal participation in journalism due to gender stereotypes, different pay for equal work and gender discrimination. Also, the paper proposes strategies that can help women to solve the current dilemmas from both individual and institutional perspectives. This analysis is highly significant in that it will help enhance the career development prospects of women journalists and their living environment in the journalism industry.*

Keywords: Female journalists; Gender equality; Journalism; Career dilemma.

1. INTRODUCTION

The absence of women's subjectivity and the negative effects of gender stereotypes in the mass media have become a subject of concern in journalism and communication research since the emergence the second wave of women's liberation in the 1960s. Women's role has become a key to their struggle for power and opportunities to the ultimate realization of gender equality. As a result, this study seeks to answer the question: What role do women journalists play in global journalism, and what are their survival status and career development prospects?

This article begins with a discussion of gender structure and the career development of women journalists in media organizations around the world. Then, a review of the long-term marginalization of "women journalists" and the origin of the research on the gradual realization of gender equality from a historical perspective will be analyzed in subsequent paragraphs. Also, the article analyzes the challenges faced by female journalists and then proposes strategies for the development of women journalists' careers in the era of global media.

2. THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN'S CAREERS IN GLOBAL JOURNALISM

Women generally face the gap between receiving journalism education and participating in journalism in global journalism. Greenwald (2020) suggests that women account for more than two-thirds of the graduates who get a degree in journalism or mass communication every year around the world, but women in the media industry only account for one-third of the industry population. York (2017) supports this notion by suggesting that the proportion of women of color entering the media industry is even lower in Western countries.

The primary cause of this problem is the lack of opportunities for women in newsrooms. In many newsrooms around the world, the glass ceiling affects which view women as unfit for some roles prevents their career advancement. In March 2023, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford released a study on the occasion of International Women's Day showing that women continue to lead news organizations in every country to a significantly lesser extent than men. The findings of the study reveal that less than a third of the 38 recently appointed media executives and senior editors are women (Adams et al., 2023). This underscores the current general predicament of women journalists' career development globally. In particular, negative stereotypes in the media industry caused by differences in the division of roles hinder female journalists from having good career development.

3. REVIEW THE ROLE AND STATUS OF "WOMAN JOURNALISTS" IN HISTORY

The history of journalism in the West shows that men have dominated the editorial department since its inception. The 1901 British census showed that the number of women working in journalism was 1,249, which was about 9 percent of the total workforce. The percentage increased to 17% in 1931 but has stagnated in the decades after. This was largely due to "women's marriage restriction" rules imposed by a large number of British media organizations (Murphy, 2014). Many women voluntarily left their jobs upon marriage because journalists' working hours conflicted with the time devoted to their families as wives and mothers.

Furthermore, the history of women's entry into journalism in the United States is similar to that of the United Kingdom. According to Ross (1936), the first book-length history of women journalists, *Women in Journalism*, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries describing how the emergence of successful "front—page women journalists" failed to change the male dominance of the newsroom. For a long time, the highest praise woman journalists received was "like men" (Ross, 1936).

In the 1980s, the gender imbalance in all professions, including journalism, became more pronounced due to the "glass ceiling effect." This means that women can enter the industry and make steady progress but face difficulties ascending to higher ranks due to invisible but insurmountable organizational biases (Assmann & Eckert, 2023). As a result, the majority of senior managers are still men, while women are blocked by internal and external barriers such as promotion channels, organizational culture, and discriminatory assessment criteria.

In the recent years, the topic of "gender composition of journalists" is a growing concern among researchers. With the increasing significance of diversity in workplace and leadership prerequisite for balanced journalism, various research projects and journalism issues are no longer satisfied with the idea that women can be the "icing on the cake" as media leaders. Researchers emphasize a balanced representation of both genders at the managerial level to promote gender equality in journalism from a substantive perspective.

4. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN'S EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN JOURNALISM

4.1 Gender Stereotypes

The division of labor in global journalism exhibits a clear imagination of gender roles in the field of journalism. Although the situation improved in the mid-to-late 20th century, the main areas in which women journalists were involved were jokingly referred to as "pink ghettos" because they covered mainly health, fashion, and lifestyle issues. According to North (2016), the main areas in which women journalists are involved have been jokingly referred to as "pink ghettos" as they cover "soft news" that is more relevant to women, such as health, fashion and entertainment.

In addition, historical biases have made it difficult for women journalists to get into "hard news" such as current affairs, finance, and international affairs. In the journalism industry, influential hard news stories often serve as an important springboard for career advancement and promotion. Therefore, gender stereotypes guiding the division of roles in the media industry make it difficult for female journalists to gain access to major news stories and, consequently, to move up the newsroom ladder.

4.2 Unequal Career Development

In terms of income disparity, female journalists generally experience low pay for the same work as men. This challenge affects their professional motivation, mentality, and forces some of them to opt out of the industry. Since 2015, the Wall Street Journal's labor union has been gradually concerned about the differences in the treatment of different genders of media workers in its own media. The findings of a survey in conjunction with other U.S. media unions reveal that there is a widespread income disparity between male and female employees within mainstream U.S. media outlets such as the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times (Chen et al., 2018). For example, the average annual salary of male media workers represented by the Wall Street Journal union was \$11,000 higher than that of women, while the figure for the New York Times was \$9500 (Chen et al., 2018). This wide gendered pay gap has triggered strong dissatisfaction among women journalists in the United States

considering the predominantly intellectual nature of the day-to-day work of the news media. As a result, some media outlets have increased female journalists' salaries to achieve equal pay for work of equal value.

4.3 Sexism and Violence

Studies have shown that women journalists are more likely to share their work and life experiences on social media, such as Twitter and Instagram. This trend makes them more vulnerable to cyberviolence and even online sexual harassment. According to Usher et al. (2018), gender-based online violence has led some women journalists to be more circumspect on social media or even to close their accounts. This is extremely detrimental to the media industry, which needs to use social media to maintain its "Presence."

In line with online harassment, female journalists are at risk of being subjected to unwanted stares whenever they are on camera. This situation has existed since the 1970s, when a BBC producer recalled that the head of the current affairs department refused to allow female journalists to report on the news, stating that "When a woman reports on war, genocide or a rail disaster, she is not taken seriously and the audience only stares at her earrings or her hairstyle." (Frank, 2013). In addition, women journalists are further labeled as "Untrustworthy," especially when reporting "Hard news," and are perceived by the public as not being authoritative because of sexism and violence. This further exacerbates the "marginalization" of women in journalism, creating a vicious circle.

5. REFORM METHODS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN JOURNALISM

5.1 Hire More Women as Full-time Journalists and Increase the Proportion of Female Executives in Journalism.

The rise of "Freelancing" worldwide has led to the increase in the number of women being employed by the media on a freelance basis. However, Massey and Elmore (2018) argue that this lack of career stability is clearly not conducive to the long-term development of women journalists. Therefore, the journalism industry needs to hire more women as full-time journalists to help balance the current imbalanced gender ratio in journalism and drive up the representation of women in newsrooms.

In addition, increasing the number of full-time female journalists alone will not improve journalism's "Sexism," and the scarcity of female executives in the media industry. Increasing the participation of more women leaders in making rules and deciding important matters in the journalism industry can help pay attention to the demands of ordinary women journalists from a "female perspective." This can also promote a balanced gender structure in the journalism industry.

5.2 Let More Women Report "Hard News" with the Theme of Politics, Economy and International Affairs.

Increasing the participation of women in reporting "hard news" can help journalists' career development. However, sexism has long prevented women from entering the field of journalism on political, economic and international affairs. Involving more women can contribute to breaking down such stereotypes and increase their career advancement in the journalism industry.

5.3 Abandon Prejudice Against Women at the Level of Values

The study by North (2016) suggests that conceptual bias exists not only in the sexism of the audience towards female journalists, but also in the male-dominated cultural logic of the newsroom. Therefore, changing the gender bias within the journalism industry is necessary to promote female journalist's career development and their evaluation based on abilities and achievements. This will also help to promote the formation of the concept of gender equality in society as a whole.

Similarly, societal bias from the society also prevents women from advancing in their careers. For example, for many female journalists who are married and have children, traditional concepts and the cost of childbearing force them to focus more on their families. As a result, it is impossible for them to concentrate fully on their work and career advancement. Therefore, gender equality can only be promoted by changing gender discrimination in society and journalism.

5.4 Helping Women Journalists Learn to Deal with Sexism and Violence in Journalism

Targeted education and training on sexual harassment and violence against women journalists is essential besides legal and institutional safeguards. This is a dimension that has been neglected in current journalism education and the training of journalistic personnel. The problem of gender-based violence encountered by female journalists in their journalistic work needs more attention and analysis by researchers, so as to help front-line female journalists find effective ways to cope with it.

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