



Prospects for Women in Journalism in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study explores the Women journalists' contributing to the society for economic prosperity and changing the attitude towards the concept of the process of development in Bangladesh. They are protecting and talking outside when facing any discrimination in their journalistic profession. Despite the barriers, women journalists are showing strong interest in journalism as a career. The findings show that women journalists are facing many barriers like family pressure, societal problem, pay-allowances, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and even lack of workplace. It is possible to survive if you have passion, professionalism, and love to this profession. In recent time Bangladesh is encouraging her women to work outside of home. Currently a significant change has come into the social attitude which is represented by women's advancement in journalism sector of Bangladesh. This study uses survey questionnaire from 120 female journalists in television, online and print media journalists to find out a fruitful result.

Keywords

Prospects; Women journalists; Attitude; Challenges; Bangladesh



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Перспективы для женщин-журналистов в Бангладеше

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Аннотация

В данном исследовании рассматриваются женщины-журналисты, которые вносят свой вклад в общественную жизнь ради экономического процветания, а также изменения отношения к концепции и процессу развития Бангладеш. Они защищаются и выступают на улицах, если сталкиваются с какой-либо дискриминацией в своей журналистской профессии. Несмотря на барьеры, женщины-журналисты проявляют большой интерес к журналистике как к карьере. По результатам исследования, женщины-журналисты встречаются со многими препятствиями, такими как давление семьи, проблемы общества, оплата труда, гендерная дискриминация, сексуальные домогательства и даже отсутствие рабочего места. Выжить можно, если иметь страсть, профессионализм и любовь к этой профессии. В последнее время Бангладеш поощряет своих женщин работать вне дома. В настоящее время в обществе произошли значительные изменения, которые способствуют продвижению женщин в журналистском секторе Бангладеш. В данном исследовании использована анкета для опроса 120 журналисток, работающих на телевидении, в Интернете и печатных СМИ, чтобы получить плодотворный результат.

Ключевые слова

перспективы; женщины-журналисты; отношение; проблемы; Бангладеш



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Introduction

In Bangladesh, women journalists are ready to work in all segments of journalism. They occupy an increasingly prominent place in the media. In this sector they have little recognition and their struggles are numerous. Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bangladeshi national poet, wrote that of all good done by the civilization, half is created by men and the other by women. This is an eternal statement that to make the world better, men and women have to work together. Recently, an increasing number of print and electronic media in Bangladesh with women reporters' participation is on rise. This participation in the discipline of journalism is changing the status of women in Bangladesh.

Before independence women were not allowed to work outside. Society does not much encourage allowing women to work outside. Bengali women first appeared on journalism in the editorial section. The first weekly magazine edited by women was launched on September 28, 1883 by Bangabashini. (Begum, 2016). The magazine focused on Bengali women issues especially Bengali women in literary activities (Basher, 2016). 1990 is a milestone for the development of the democratic process. (Babul, 2010) This has made a great contribution to the mindset of the people, especially to women's thinking. Many newspapers in the country also appeared in that period. Although women were initially involved in editing newspapers, they are gradually entering other areas of journalism.

Significance of the study

The imminent progress in society will depend on effective achievement of a gender discrimination policy for Bangladesh. But female journalists don't have enough involvement in news sector (Safa, 2015). In modern society, we know that the media plays a vital role. Women journalism means the news content for women and is collected, written or produced in the journal by women (Naturanjan, 1981). This study will define the future prospects for female journalist and the development of women journalism in Bangladesh. Development acceleration is essential for Bangladesh. In principle, women's journalism should truly reflect the current status of women and their desires and needs. In any country, woman is the vital part to contribute to the development of these.

The study will be helpful to develop women journalist sector in Bangladesh. Currently, women journalism progress rate is not expectable in the media industry of Bangladesh. No country can advance development by replacing its female half-population. Men and women have to work together for the development. The role of journalism is immense in the development of global civilization. We cannot expect hope from this if gender discrimination exists in such important professions. The main purpose of my research is to highlight the issue of gender discrimination, injustice and inequity in the journalistic profession, which is being practiced to women journalists. If we analyze the problem more and more today or tomorrow



the problem will be removed from the society and its people will be able to go forward.

Literature review

In Bangladesh, there are four main types of journalists at work (Abbas, 2009). First is foreign media employees in Bangladesh, Second, urban media employees, third, rural or semi-urban media employees, and fourth, grassroots representatives of urban media. In all sort, a large number of women are contributing in journalistic profession and changing their social status. This is an external view of women reporters of Bangladesh. If we look at its internal conditions, we can frequently forecast that in Bangladesh, women have been disappointed to do journalism. Women's participation in journalism, including print and electronic media, has grown significantly in the past few years; however most people give up their careers of various issues (Rahman, 2017). Overall women in media make up less than a quarter of journalists. Dr. Nasrin explains the reasons that prevent women from working in media (Pulitzer, 2009).

The first Bengal weekly was edited by Bangladeshi Muslim female Begum Sufia Kamal. "Begum" was published on July 20, 1947. Jahanara Arzu and Sufia Kamal jointly published "Sultana" in January 1949. They took this profession as a passion and pastime. Since the 1960s, women began to start journalism with a professional outlook. The first group of Bangladeshi Muslim women who participated in the daily newspaper was Hajera Mahmud who worked in Daily Ittehad. (Othondrila, 2014).

Journalism is a profession that fascinates men and women, but social prohibition and poor occupational environments have kept them from working in Bangladesh's media. Despite this, a new generation of women is moving forward with the support of their leading colleagues. According to an October 2016 report by News24 senior female journalist Shehnaz Munni, a private television channel in Bangladesh, only 5% of women journalists in Bangladesh media industry are in print and 25% in electronic media. (Rahman, 2017). These statistics illustrate the barrier and challenges facing female journalists in Bangladesh.

Job satisfaction is the performance and organizational rewards. The general understanding is that job satisfaction is an attitude towards work. In other words, it is an emotional response to all aspects of work. A person with a high level of job satisfaction has a positive attitude towards his or her work, and a person who is dissatisfied with his or her job has a negative attitude towards the job. Job satisfaction is defined as "the emotional state of the individual that achieves or promotes the achievement of the value of the individual's work" (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002).

Over the years, employee job satisfaction has become a key research area for industrial and organizational psychologists. There are very important reasons why companies should be concerned about the satisfaction of employees, which can be classified according to the focus of employees or organizations. First, the humanitarian point of view is that people should be treated fairly and respected. Employees



gratification is a reflection of good treatment. It can also be considered an indicator of emotional health or mental health. Second, the utilitarian view is that the gratification can lead to the behavior of employees who affect the functioning of the organization. In addition, employee's satisfaction can reflect organizational functions. Differences between organizational units of employee's satisfaction can diagnose potential problems. Each reason is enough to justify them. In many organizations, the job satisfaction assessment is a common activity, and management believes that employee benefits are important. (Spector, 1997)

In our society men do not respect women who go out alone, so women journalists are vulnerable to sexual harassment. Socio-cultural factors play a vital role in advancing or controlling women's access to journalism. Despite the rise in number of women journalists in last few years, the percentage still is not as high as in the other professions. The main reason of this problem is that women's legal status is still subject to religious law in terms of inheritance, marriage, and divorce and children custody. Religious law always violates the interests of women journalists. (Nasreen, 2003). Social attitudes still oppose gender equality. Many times, women do not understand their rights. Even women who rely on male protection, unconsciously are depending on male; although they know that they are self-reliant.

In addition, Bangladesh has recently experienced a massive re-institutionalization of Islamic values and radical propaganda by the militant. Fundamentalists have created Islamic hegemony in the country. Islamic militant group always dislike and demand banning the free movement of men and women in public speech. Sometime these extremists do attack women journalists verbally, even physically as well. (Safa, 2015).

Angur Nahar Monty is a joint news editor of News24 TV. She said media companies need to take appropriate steps to provide skills development training for women journalists. Women journalists do not have the opportunity to assume decision-making positions, although they are capable or sometimes more skilled than men. In many instances, they saw many girls leaving the profession for a variety reasons. So in this circumstance women journalists should accept challenges to survive, not give up the profession. They must fight back by being skilled and capable of using their strengths. (UNB, 2017)

Although the number of women journalists has increased in the past few years, their participation in decision-making has not grown. According to The Gender Forum in the media Women journalists have repeatedly proved that they can do the same job as their male counterparts can do, but they do not get the same opportunity like male journalist. Women's empowerment in different sectors should be highlighted to encourage more women to contribute to social development.

Nowadays the scenario has changed. Many educated women are entering the journalism professions. Their presence is real in all kind of media like newspaper, TV, Radio and online journalism. Women journalist's participation is compar-



atively a little bit more in radio and TV channels than in newspapers. Last decade a daily English newspaper “New Age” was launched in Bangladesh. “New Age” has employed about 20 percent of women staff including 4 in the reporting section. About 10 percent of women journalists are working with highest circulated daily, “Prothom Alo”. (Begum, 2005). From the last decade up to now, day by day the situation is changing quickly. The government is working to achieve the goal of Bangladesh’s sustainable development in 2030. Where there is a condition, gender discrimination will be eliminated in all cases. Women participation must be 50-50 in the media by 2030. (Bdnews, 2018) The purpose of this study was to evaluate the prospects of women journalists in Bangladesh. The researcher assessed the situation on the base of some questions like a. What are the internal and external situation of women journalists in Bangladesh? (Why are these problems and what is their future?); b. What is the prospect of women journalists in Bangladesh? (Is there a new prospect?); c. What is the role of women journalists? (Why exactly these roles?).

Methodology of the study

This study quantitatively analyzes the data from survey questionnaire with 150 female journalists, who have worked in different positions in print, electronic and online media in Bangladesh. Cross-sectional research design was used in this study in Bangladesh in 2018. The time period for data collection was approximately 3 month. The questionnaires were equally distributed to female journalists in print, electronic and online media. However, 30 questionnaires were disregarded as they were not filled correctly.

Cross-sectional design aims to study a phenomenon by taking its cross-section at a time, (Babbie, 1989). Cross-sectional design collects data at a single point in time from a sample drawn whose observational tool consists of a closed individual questionnaire directed to a representative sample of the population of Bangladeshi journalists. The data was collected at a single point from various media houses of Bangladesh and exhibiting diversity of age, race, and education to provide a fuller picture of the female journalists in Bangladeshi media house. The entire questionnaire was conducted in English. The survey consisted of a series of questions related to working conditions, discrimination, job segregation, job satisfaction, recruitment, promotion and sexual harassment, and generally followed questions.

In this study, the purposive sampling procedure had been conducted. This technique was preferred based on different aspects of purposes of the study. Crossman termed purposive sampling as very similar to subjective, judgmental, or selective sampling. (Crossman, 2018). Data analysis was done by using computer assisted software ms excel and SPSS. Different statistical functions e.g. frequency, percentage, means, standard deviation were measured to analyze the answers given by the respondents and an option was set for them if they willingly gave any comments.



Data Presentation

Women Journalists condition in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has practices journalism through different mediums. Female journalists are working in these mediums such as electronic, print and online media. Among them online journalism is a new concept which is thriving nowadays in Bangladesh with notable participation of women. From a historical standpoint, female journalists have plainly made great progress in the last few decades. They are working in all sections of media house and their participation in media industries has increased. They are not only participating in cooking, fashion, art and culture but also in news media reporting. From news section to the stock market, battle-field, government house and almost everywhere they are reporting well.

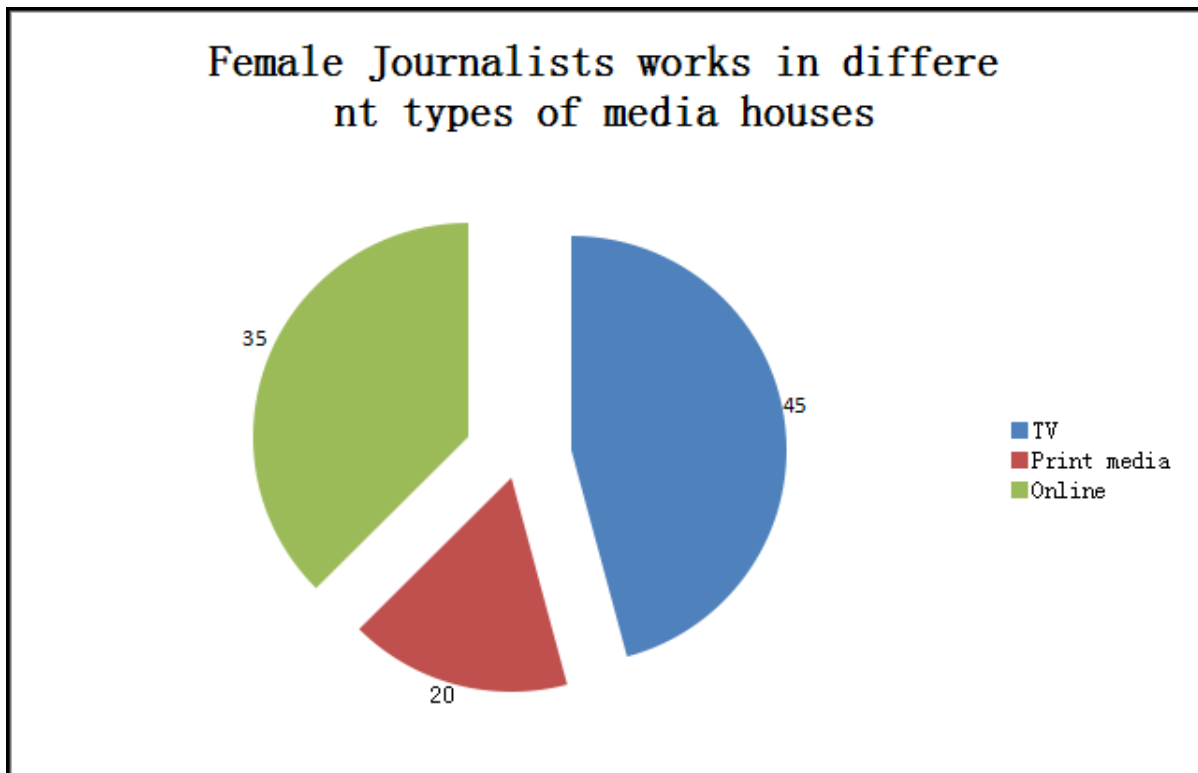


Figure 1. Women journalists engaged in different media houses

Figure 1 shows that television media has the highest percentage of female employees. Among them 45 % women journalists work in television media, 35 % women work in online media and rest 20 % work in the traditional print media journalism. In research it is found out that TV media is giving better salary and facility than news media.

In various media industry the quantity of women journalists have grown steadily in the newsroom section as their numbers increased. In the case of lower numbers in the local media, the reality indicates how much injustice women



employees receive from here. The research reveals that women are still choosing their journalism careers with a broad positive mindset where they can flourish their excellence. They dedicate to contribute to media industry and often some of them can overcome the difficulties surpassing the assumption of management and colleagues. Actually, women report several times and their targets are halted before they accomplish their objectives. Women are entering the media industry and continuing to work in the face of these setbacks, indicating that they are determined to keep voices of women alive.

Experience of Women Journalists

Nowadays, women are engaging more and more in the journalism profession. In this research, we come to the conclusion that all the interviewed women journalists are participating in media profession between one to ten years.

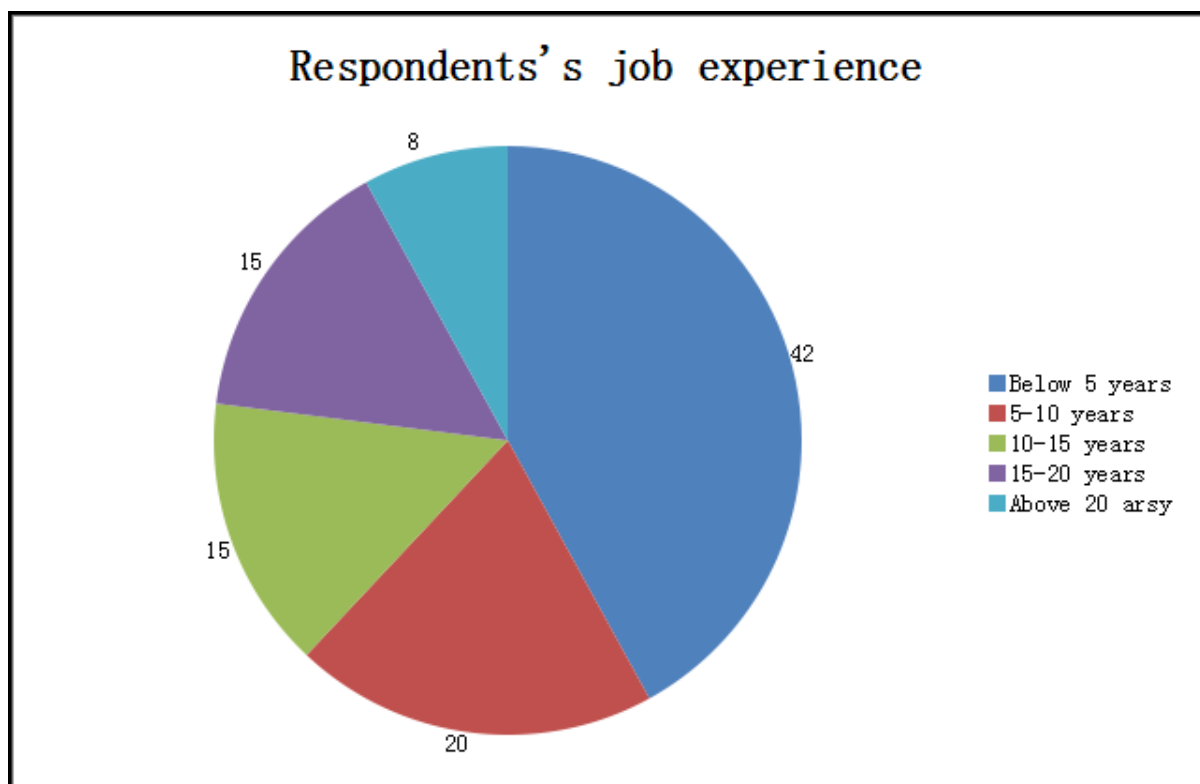


Figure 2. Journalistic experience of women journalist

The above figure 2 shows that below 5 years experienced women journalists are higher in number than any other experienced journalists. Five to ten years experienced women journalist are 20 percent; both ten to fifteen years and fifteen to twenty years experienced journalists are 15 percent respectively; above 20 years experienced women journalists are only 8 percent. Young women are very much devoted to this profession. They know that it's a challenging profession. They keep it for their passion, love, and responsibility.



Recently, women are very interested and are accepting this challenging profession, journalism. A few years ago women's work in the media field was a rare situation. In the 'The daily star' famous English daily newspaper in Bangladesh, 40 women journalist are working out of 280 employees. Women reporters are working in the 16 parts of the newspaper, and all 16 sections, magazines, law and our rights, lifestyle, culture and computer science are led by women journalists. In addition, there are many women journalists working in different policy developing positions in the organization. As a result, there are more experienced women journalists because now they are being challenged and piously working according to the needs of the company and the public.

Monthly salary and remuneration of Women journalists

Key issues that come out from the study are lack of security, safety and stability in job. Women reporters are working under pressure and always think that they are going to lose their job for minor reasons. Nevertheless, even under such kind of pressure, they don't stop their job for a moment. They always appreciate for the hard work for a better future.

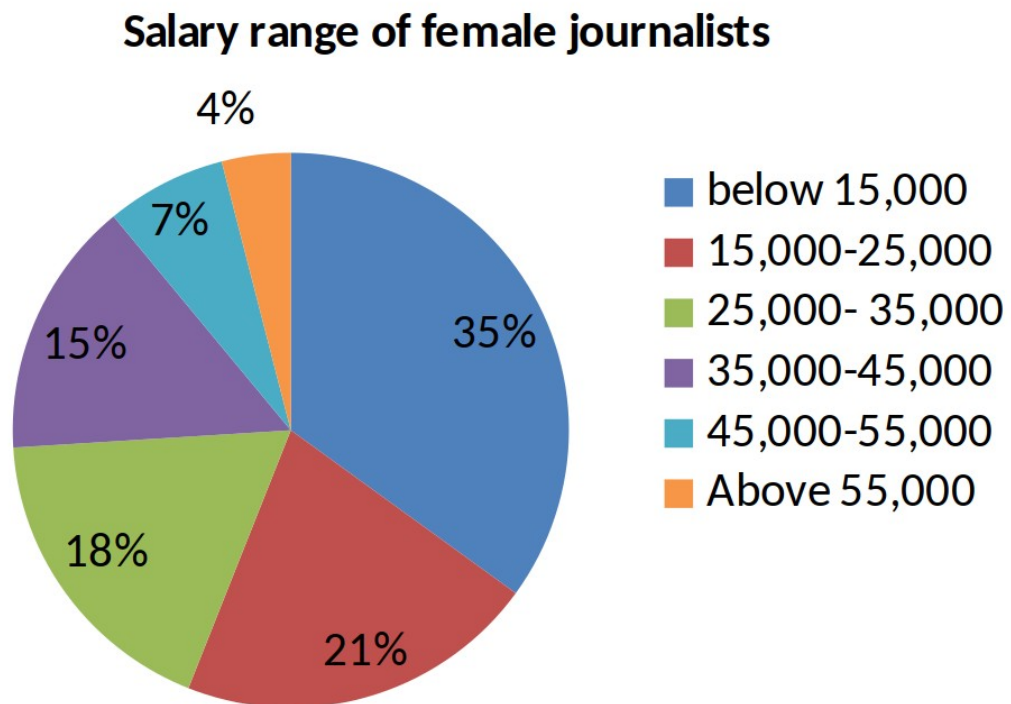


Figure 3. Range of salary of women journalists

The above figure shows that 35 % respondents earn less than 15,000 Bangladeshi currency (BDT) per month. 21 % women journalists earn 15,000 to 25,000 (BDT) while 18 % earn from 25,000 to 35,000 (BDT) and 15% earn 35,000- 45,000 (BDT). Only 4 % women journalists earn above 50,000 (BDT).



Now, the media houses are recruiting more women since these houses can get employees available within lower salaries on the contract basis. In the prevailing situation, the government came to promote this virtuous profession. It has declared the journalism wage board to cover the situation and encouraging them to join the journalism field to serve the society. As a result, some media outlets like The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Samakal, Jugantor are maintaining the government wage board for their journalists and they are getting better salary with this profession now.

Salary Discrimination in Media Houses of Bangladesh

Salary discrimination in media houses

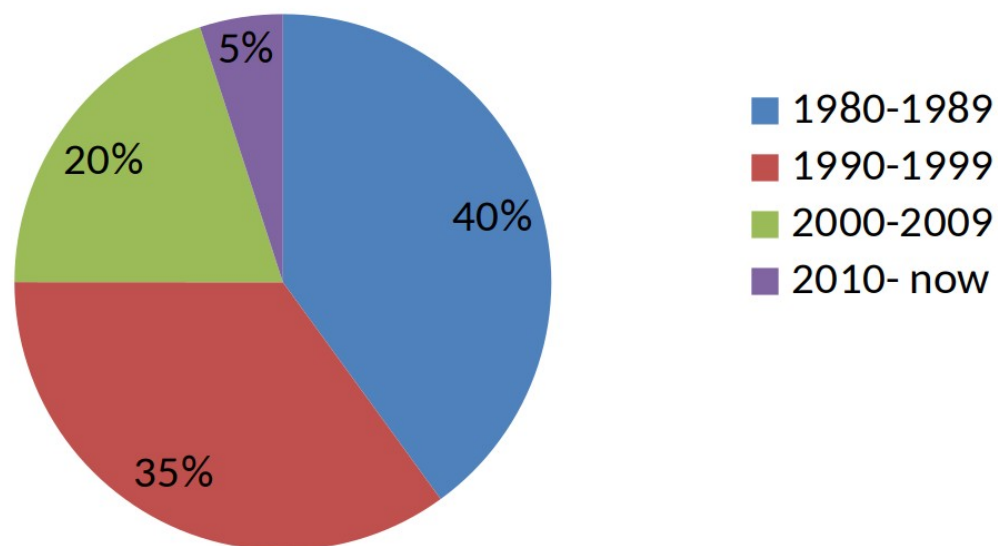


Figure 4. Salary discrimination in media houses of Bangladesh

The pie chart 4 describes that 4 decades ago the discrimination salary range of women journalist was near about forty percent with their male counterparts. That time society thought that journalism was a male profession. Even social trends also ignore the women as journalists, and society persuaded them that journalism is a male-dominated profession. After one decade the discrimination decreased a little bit, and this decade women journalists are enjoying almost the same salary with their male counterparts. However, the research shows that this time women also have five percent difference with their salary. But this difference will not exist within some period of time. The research found out that, globally, women journalists are doing well in their profession. They have proven that they can do the same work as men.



Interesting of different ages of women journalists

Different ages of female journalists

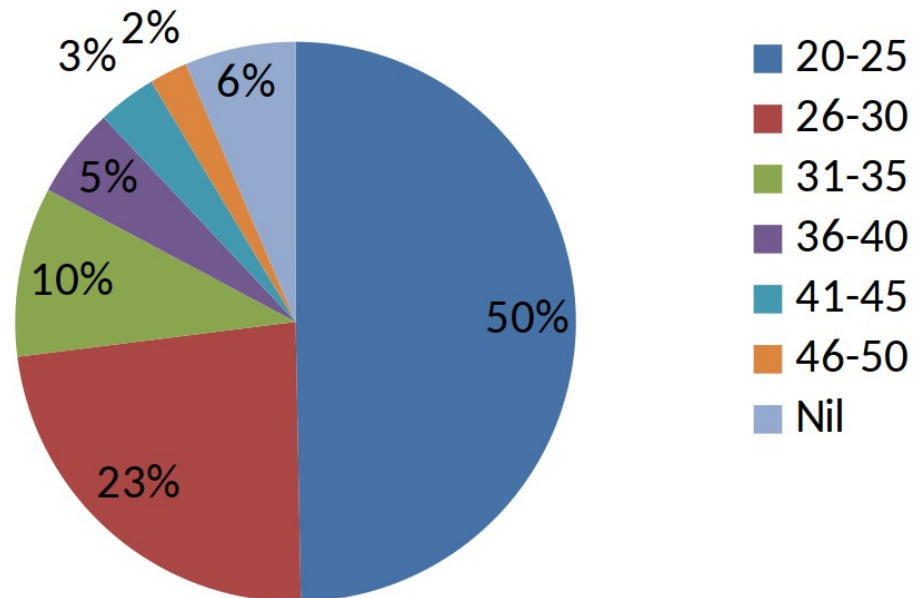
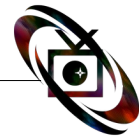


Figure 5. Interesting of different age range of women journalists

Figure shows that young generation of women are more interested in joining the media as a profession. They are more than 73% from 20 to 30 years. Middle age women from 31 to 40 years only reach 15%. Only 2% women are of old age. So the trend shows that young women are choosing the journalism as their favorable carrier. They are working both in media organization like 24/7 TV channel, newspaper, online news, radio.

Family support at journalism sector

Figure shows that Bangladeshi families are very much concerned about their girls. They are highly encouraging and supporting their girls to work outside in such a challenging profession as journalism. Few years ago the society couldn't imagine such kind of support from the family. Figure shows that 85% are more positive about their job and only few percent hold negative views. To reach this position, Bangladesh government and society are continuously working on their women empowerment. As a result, women are choosing the job in media sector.



Family support at journalism sector

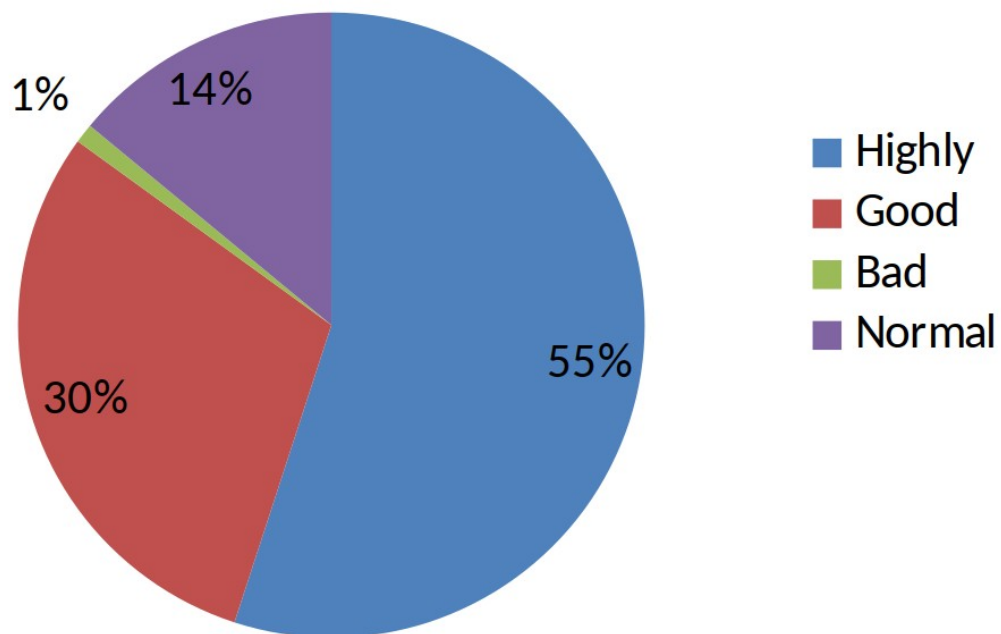


Figure 6. Family support at journalism sector in Bangladesh

Gender discrimination in Media Houses

Nowadays women are frequently working in the popular media houses. They face, though, sexual harassment and unnecessary contact from their male colleagues in the newsroom. Most of them don't protest against such behavior because they are afraid of losing their jobs. Apart from them, very few women actually understand how to handle gender issues and their implications. They have to fight continuously for their place.

In figure 6, it appears that 58% female journalists consider themselves victims of gender discrimination in the media house while 42% of them counter that they didn't face such kind of discrimination. Though the reduction rate of gender discrimination is not much higher but the situation is more optimistic. Before 4 to 5 years the gender discrimination rate was 83% and 17% (Safa, 2015). Comparing this range, we can realize that the situation is going better quickly. The unique point is that nowadays, if faced any gender discrimination in the house, women are reacting against it, protecting themselves. They are able to raise their voice to upper stair of the house. One decade ago women journalist could not imagine such kind of protest in their journalism profession. That time their working percentage was very few – like 4% women (Chowdhury, 2014). So that time they didn't voice against discrimination. But nowadays they are getting support from their families and society to raise their voice and women are joining the profession more than before.



Gender discrimination in media houses

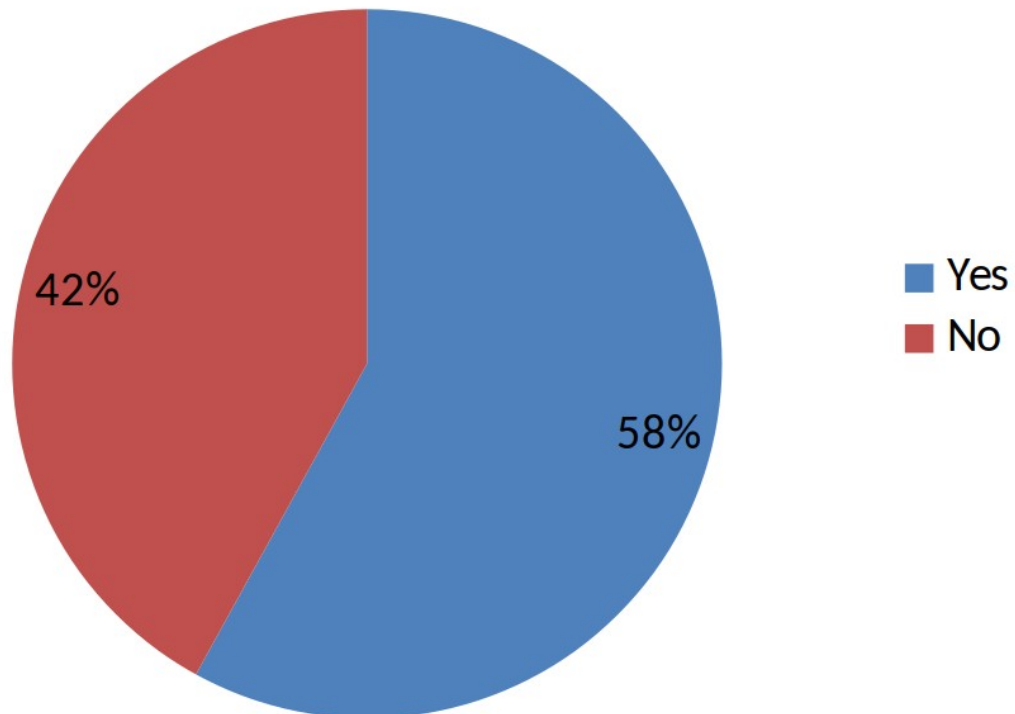


Figure 7. Discrimination in media houses of Bangladesh based on gender

Job Satisfaction of Women Journalists in Bangladesh

Most women reporters may want this job to satisfy them. But they are not always satisfied with it. Sometimes it gives them little scope to improve their skills and advance forward in job even though they have no complain about their salary. Another reason is that the job may offer kind a work they enjoy but get a little benefit. (Robbins, 91) Most of the women journalists are not satisfied with their media job as they get paid of Tk. 10000 to Tk.15000 as their monthly salary based on contract where they have no maternity leave and baby-care provisions; rather they are to confront sexual harassment.

The study shows that 65% respondents are not satisfied with their job while only 35 % respondents mentioned that they are satisfied. Senior Dhaka-based journalist Vichitra Sharma said: "As a journalist or network reporter, I do no longer look forward to the progress of my career, which usually makes people comfort in thirties. But, people need to grow up in their profession. If the institution does not promote their growth, then they must look elsewhere". Her views on the workspace are limited to women who need to be cherished by the institution.

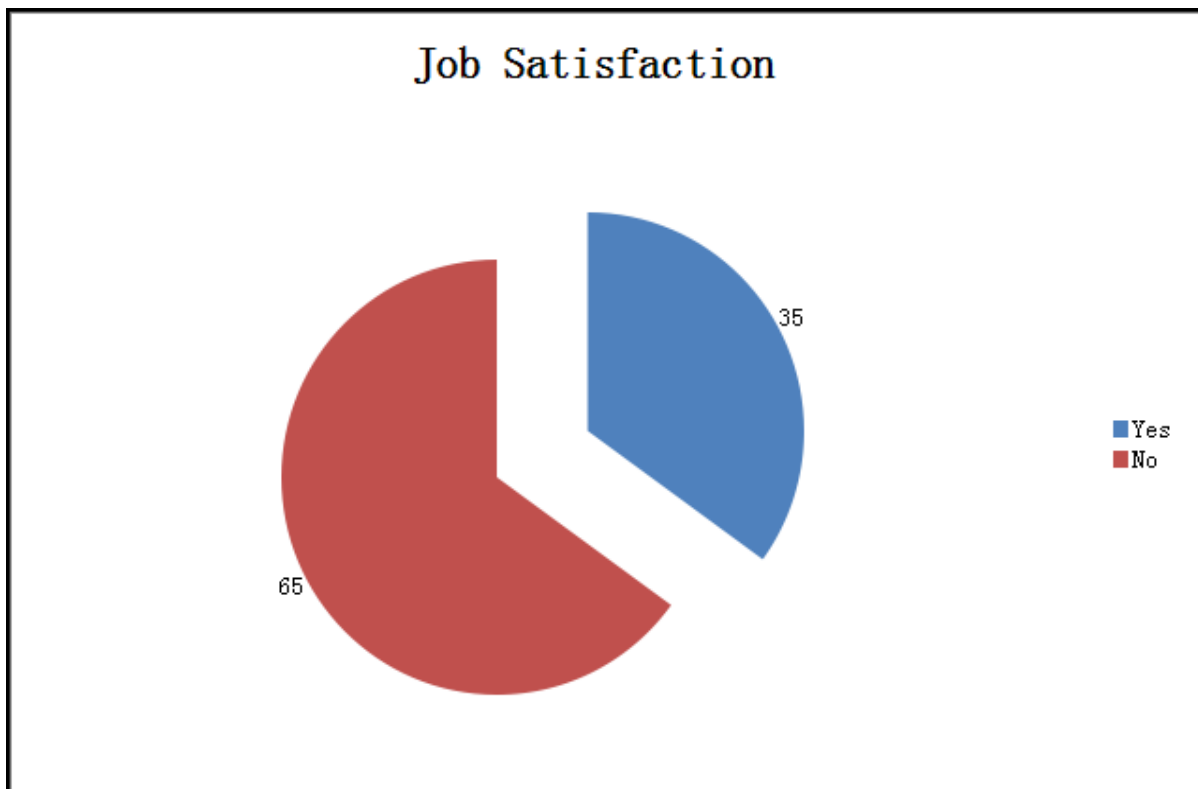


Figure 8. Job satisfaction of women journalists

In Bangladesh, only a few media organizations have professional training programs. “The Daily Star” regularly organizes internal training programs for its employees, especially for reporters and sub-editors. In order to improve journalism skills, the newspaper hired domestic and foreign experts and held internal seminars. In addition, members of the organization participate in other training courses and seminars at home and abroad. Furthermore, receiving foreign interns under its exchange programs, the newspaper house also sends its reporters and sub-editors overseas for internship. “The Daily Star” also encourages journalists to seek for foreign scholarships to hone their journalism skills, which in some ways helps other employees to enrich their skills after returning home. But women reporters barely mentioned it. On the other hand, most print, online and television media do not offer this skill development program, nor do they have training facilities. If their choices are limited, women reporters rarely get the chance.

Findings of the study

Female journalists have increased the share of jobs in all media sectors in the last two decades; they are fundamentally changing their functioning and creating own space for themselves covering health, environment, social concerns, children and women’s issues in Bangladesh. In recent times, they are getting the family support and positive feedback from the society.



The main findings of this study are that women journalists gained voice. They speak out openly if they face any discrimination directed towards them. They tell what's going on with them and they are able to create a positive image to family and society.

Now the sexual harassment and gender discrimination are decreasing. But still up to 40% of women journalists face sexual harassment, and they don't take actions against such behavior because they are afraid of losing their jobs.

Many Bangladeshi newspapers assign women into the places like Sub-editors' desks or soft news sections, such as features, entertainment or social pages where they have relatively low risk of sexual harassment and violence. Working in the sub-editor desk on the Bangladeshi news media is considered less important than collecting news.

Nevertheless, some women journalists are fully involved in the decision-making process. They can report on any incident from natural disasters to elections. They even broadcast news about dangerous situations, which proves that women can send news from anywhere at any time.

Though the situation is changing, very few female journalists choose this profession for good. As a long time journalism career, we find a very small figure for women journalists in Bangladesh. Only 2% female exist in this profession as a long time career.

Bangladeshi media house still have some drawbacks, especially speaking about women journalists. These are not getting equal treatment from their office. Up to now, most of the media houses can not create women-friendly work environment. They are unconscious about maternity leave for their female journalists. Bangladeshi male dominating the society have disrespectful attitude toward women who go out alone. As a result most of the female journalists are losing their job after a certain period.

Women journalists often work excessively (twice as hard as male colleagues) and have equal opportunities for employment. But in fact, many organizations regularly use weak excuses to reject women's promotion because of their disinterest in doing night shifts.

Women journalists must receive recommendations or opinions about sexual behavior in order to make progress in the profession. They are more helpless than male colleagues in every aspect of job related activities in this field.

Conclusion and recommendations

Journalism is a very challenging profession. In journalism, women suffer many difficulties as members of media houses. With all difficulties, they are still working hard and contributing in this field. They feel for journalism, they have to be more impartial and encouraging. The government and media organizations should take steps to create a favorable environment for women from different backgrounds to come forward and join journalism. So to increase the number of women journal-



ists in the media sector there is no other way than to increase efficiency and establish training programs for women journalists. Female journalists are doing their best to reach the peak but they don't know how to use their talents to make them more dynamic than male colleagues.

Education, suitable working environment and proper training are the key component to increase the women participation in journalism sector. We are able to change our social norms, and behavior, by proper education.

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