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The Changing role of gender - with special reference to media in Bihar

• Nancy Gupta • Shreya • Shreya Tiwari

• Minati Chaklanavis

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Corresponding Author : Minati Chaklanavis

Abstract : *The growing contribution and participation of women in journalism has opened a new era for the enhancement of the socioeconomic condition of women. Increased exposure to media in Bihar has resulted in need for an adequate representation of women in media. This in turn has not only provided a source of livelihood for women journalists but also ensured adequate and effective representation of women journalists in media.*

With their will power and hard work, they are seen working shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts in every event, including natural calamities, such as, flood and earthquake etc. To analyze the changing role of gender in media, a survey was conducted amongst the media

professionals. The findings depicted that though the involvement of the women journalists is increasing, they have to walk a long way to make a mark and acquire senior positions in the field of media. Interestingly, some of the male journalists indicated family as their priority while going to an urgent field reporting task, while female journalists took these opportunities as a challenge. They seem to be keen to take any responsibility of reporting, editing or production. Though the issue of security remains a major concern for all the respondents, there is always a possibility of overcoming these challenges that women in general face.

Keywords: Gender Sensitization; Beats; Media; Women Journalists.

Nancy Gupta

BMC II year, Session: 2015-2018,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Shreya

BMC II year, Session: 2015-2018,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Shreya Tiwari

BMC II year, Session: 2015-2018,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Minati Chaklanavis

Head, Department of Mass Communication,
Patna Women's College, Bailey Road,
Patna – 800 001, Bihar, India
E-mail : minati.25@gmail.com

Introduction :

It has been constantly said that women are the backbone of our society but, in reality, the society has a different perspective towards them. It is expected that media should play an important role in empowering them by creating awareness about the rights of this section, as it (media) is said to be the voice of the backward and oppressed sections of the society. Having been neglected for centuries, women also need a push to claim their rightful place in the society—equivalent to that enjoyed by men.

Media has contributed a lot by portraying the 'sorry state' of affairs of the fair sex, but there is a lot to do when it comes to an equal footing with men for the women in the media industry itself. The adverse effects of which, as prevalent these days, are bitter testimony to women

being objectified for vested gains. It is irrefutable that many media houses widely promote feminist glamour to market their journal or TV channels.

Increased exposure to media in Bihar has resulted in a need for abundant representation of women in public and private sectors of the media. This, in turn, has not only provided a source of revenue for women journalists, but also ensured adequate and effective representation of women journalists in media. With their will power and hard work, they are seen standing shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts in every event, including natural calamities, such as, flood and earthquake etc.

To evaluate the increasing role of women in media, a survey was conducted amongst the media professionals. The findings depicted that, though the participation of the women journalists was increasing, they have to walk a long way to make a mark in the field of media. Interestingly, some of the male journalists indicated family as their preference while going to an urgent field reporting task, while female journalists took these opportunities as a challenge. They seem to be keen to take any task of reporting, editing or production. The issue of security remained a major concern for all of the respondents, as it was related to a larger perspective of the society.

The functioning and overall structure of the media industry in Bihar has undergone a major change in the last few years. Some factors have shaped the growth of this powerful medium of Communication over the years.

Globalization has opened the floodgates to a cut-throat competition practically in every sphere of our activities. The media and communication industry has contributed immensely in facilitating overall globalization and, in turn, this industry has also been affected by this occurrence.

There was a time when it was hard to spot a woman journalist in the field covering some crucial event related to business, finance, natural calamities etc. But now, as a welcome change, women journalists are occupying responsible positions both in the managerial and editorial cadre in media industry. Women are working in Media houses as Producer, Technician, Cameraperson, Editor, Reporter and Anchor as well. However, women representation, in comparison to their male counterparts in the media industry is still very small.

Another important issue is professional inequality based on social differences between men and women. It is often seen that women journalists are assigned soft beats such as entertainment, fashion and education.

However, now it has been observed that women journalists are moving beyond these boundaries. It has been a hard struggle for women to break through the glass ceiling.

A rationale of the study is presented here in order to show in more detail what kind of research was done before considering changing the role of gender in media. The objectives and hypothesis are introduced in order to strengthen the relevance of this research, in this case-theory concerning representation, discourse and gender discrimination. Various methods, such as, quantitative content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis are described and discussed in order to support choice of method for this study. A discourse analysis of a questionnaire is conducted in order to answer our research questions. Last, but not the least, a brief conclusion is drawn regarding the results of this research.

Objectives :

The research study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the various parameters of change.
- To inquire regarding discrimination in terms of gender.
- To find out the level of involvement of women journalists in media houses.

Hypothesis :

The hypothesis of the study concerns the basic assumptions or beliefs upon which the entire study is based which would be verified by the study. The hypothesis of our research is as follows:

- Women journalists are underrepresented.
- There is significant demarcation in beat allocation and promotion.
- Participation of women journalists in media is lower than men.

Methodology :

- **Area of study :** Surveys from media organization:

The finding of the survey study includes data collected from 70 working women and men journalists of both print and digital media organizations. Data was collected using the 'personal contact' approach. Questionnaires were distributed among a sample of 70 working men and women in Patna out of which 50 valid and complete responses were returned. Also face-to-face interviews were conducted.

The questionnaire consisted of 10 close-ended questions to meet the objectives of the study. It included questions related to promotion issues, demarcation in beat allocation, discrimination based on gender, workplace discrimination, safety and securities issues, family support etc. The survey questionnaire also included a section/place for the general profile information of the respondents. The information asked included questions regarding their age, years of experience, their designation and contact no.

- **Data collection**

- (a) **Primary sources** : The methodology followed by a questionnaire – based on survey among men and women of both print and digital organization and it also included face-to-face interviews of a few of the working media persons. The questionnaire also included profile details and years of experience (in the organization) etc.

- (b) **Secondary sources** : Reviews and data were collected from various sources like the internet, pdf from Wood Gendered Media and IWMMF. The model used for study was the conceptual method.

- **Methods of data collection:**

Survey : The survey was followed by a questionnaire – based on survey among men and women of both print and digital organization and it also included face-to-face interviews of a few of the working media persons. The questionnaire for the survey consisted of 10 close-knit questions on various aspects of the study.

To meet the objectives of the study the items in the questionnaire included the changing role of gender.

Based on the following the data and the graph were prepared.

Findings :

According to tables 1 to 10 we arrive at the following conclusion :

1. Women are underrepresented in media substantially.
2. Women are discriminated against in the field of media.
3. Males outnumber females in media.
4. When faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination, women fight against discrimination.
5. There is differentiation in the payments of men and women assigned for the same work.
6. Co-workers are treated differently because of gender issues.
7. Media persons in general do not have gender preference.
8. Media persons agreed that ratio of women in the media sector has shown a rise in past years.
9. Media persons get late night assignments.
10. There is family support for the media profession.

According to Graph 1 to 10 we arrive at the following results :

1. The women in media are grossly underrepresented.
2. Women are highly discriminated against while working on the field report.
3. The males outnumber females overwhelmingly in the field.
4. Almost all the media persons consider fighting against gender discrimination.
5. A largely number of people believe that there is no comparison in the payments given to both women and men for the same work assigned to them.
6. A large number of people believe that there has been no discrimination based on gender issues in the media houses.

7. Almost all media persons believe that it doesn't matter who they work with in their organization.
8. There has been a remarkable rise of women in the field of media.
9. Media persons believe that they get late night assignments depending on their work.
10. Almost all media persons agreed that their family supported them for this profession.

According to the survey, the ratio of women in the media sector has shown a rise in the past few years. They are rising but the top positions like producers, executives and chief editors are still male subjugated. Moreover, female journalists are more likely to be discriminated against in the field report, beat allocation and promotion (hierarchy). It also came to light that the media persons are aware of gender bias and 90% of them will fight against the discrimination.

To understand the level of working conditions and satisfaction among media persons a survey was conducted. The results indicated that approximately 60% felt that women and men received equal wages for equal work in media organization.

Recommendation :

There is need to have gender policies at the workplace and, if available, sensitize all employees, including journalists, about it. Special needs of women, especially those in field assignment, should be considered and taken care of, so as to provide them with a conducive environment to operate.

Engage the media in spreading awareness on: 1) the importance of gender equality as an essential element in media; 2) Active support.

initiatives that can increase the space of men and women in the media.

Limitation :

The study was conducted only to selected indicators which were significant to the topic. There are large populations of media persons in Bihar but the study was limited only to the media persons of the capital.

The journalist/media persons who were associated with the study were asked for their designation and

years of experience in the field. In this regard, all respondents were assured of high confidentiality as guarantee for agreeing to participate in the study. The time duration in which the project was completed was limited.

Conclusion :

At a time when our society is said to be modern, it is expected that in terms of assigning responsibility, there should be no discrimination. There are still some issues, like social security, physical appearance, which are affecting women journalists' progressive approach. The responses towards the gender angle at the time of beat-allocation and coverage deployment show that women are still struggling for hard news stories. Most of the journalists say that they feel no difference in the news channel's hiring policy, pay wages, beat-allocation while recruiting any male or female journalists. In comparison to the earlier scenario, working women are now openly admitting the loopholes of the system and want to be a part of the positive change. They are daring, intelligent, talented and open minded now. Another important point which emerged out of the content analysis is that male journalists also want equal participation for their female counterparts. This can be analyzed as a positive sign in the mental approach in our patriarchal society.

Results from the study show that, despite progress made in gender representation in the media, men still dominate the media in Bihar— as reporters, journalists, editors and as news sources.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Opinion regarding the underrepresentation of women in media.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	31	62
No	18	36

Table 2. Opinions regarding the discrimination of women in the field.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Beat allocation	21	42
Promotion (Hierarchy)	9	4.5
Field report	28	56
If any other, please specify	11	22

Table 3. Opinions regarding which segment males outnumber females.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Prime time shows	5	10
News caster	4	8
In the field	33	66
None	11	22

Table 4. Opinion of the media persons and their stand when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Suffer in silence		
Resign	5	10
Fight against discrimination	44	90
If any other, please specify		

Table 5. Opinions whether males get more payment in comparison to females for the same work assigned.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	23	46
No	30	60
If any other, please specify	1	2

Table 6. Opinions of media person whether they have ever witnessed a situation where their co-workers were treated differently because of their gender.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	8	16
No	42	84

Table 7. Opinions on who the media persons would like working with.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Male colleagues	6	12
Women colleagues	3	5
Doesn't matter	40	80

Table 8. Opinions regarding the rise of women in media during the past years.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	48	96
No	1	2
If any other, please specify		

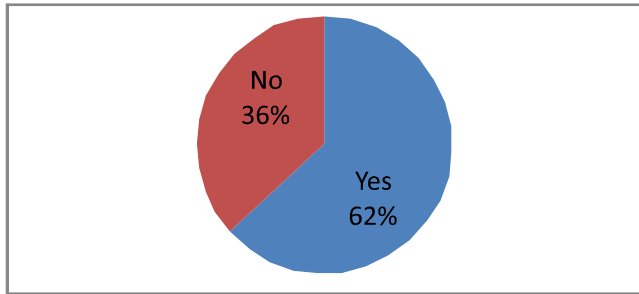
Table 9. Opinions regarding late night assignments.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Frequently	7	14
Rarely	12	24
Depending on assignment	31	62
If any other, please specify	—	—

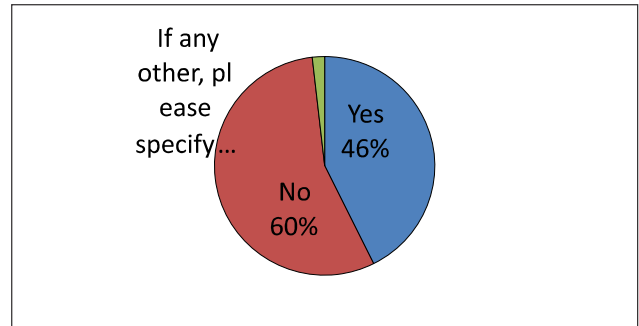
Table 10. Opinions regarding family support for the profession.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	48	96
No	2	4

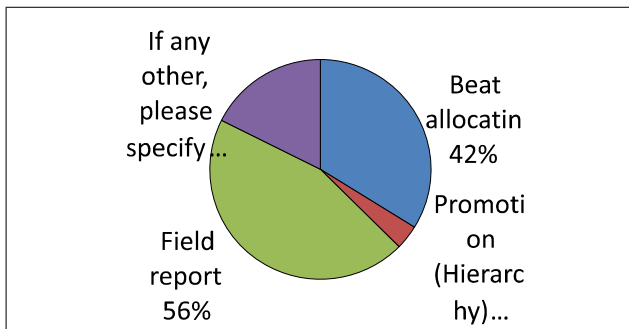
LIST OF GRAPHS



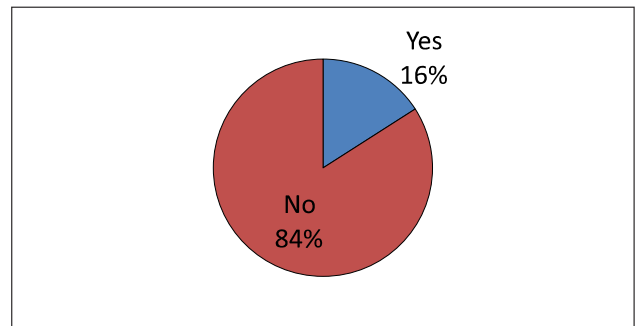
Graph 1. Distribution of underrepresented women in media



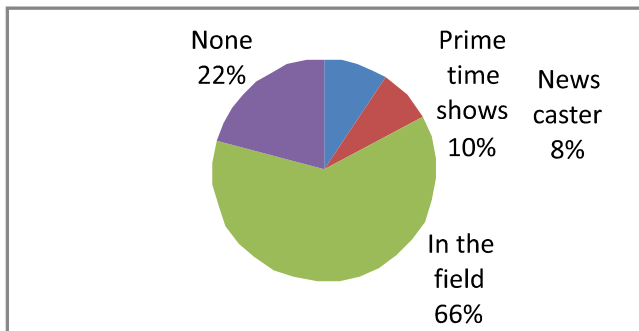
Graph 5. Differentiation in the payments of men and women assigned for the same work



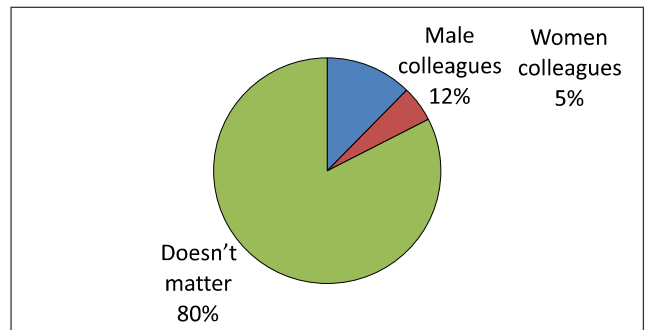
Graph 2. Discrimination of women in the field of media



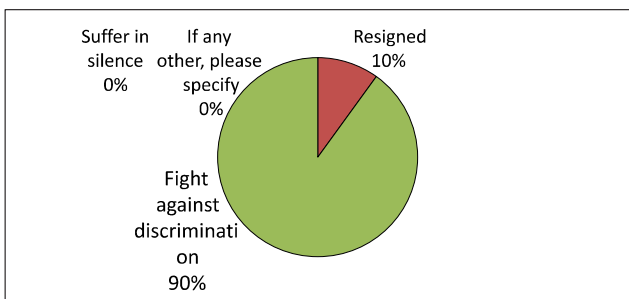
Graph 6. Co-workers being treated differently because of the gender issue



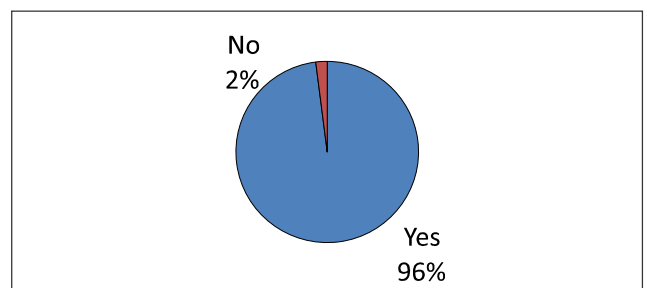
Graph 3. Different fields in media where males outnumber females



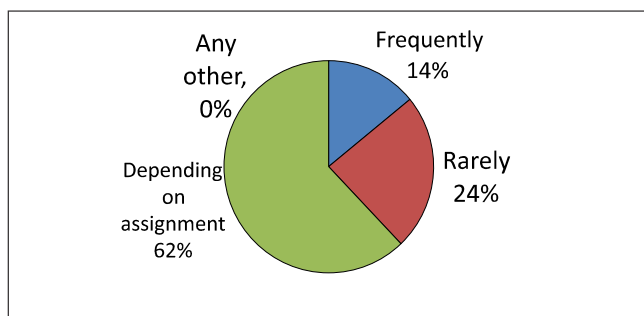
Graph 7. Media persons prefer working with both male and female employees



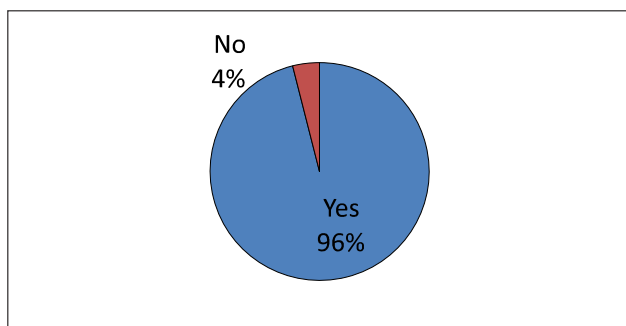
Graph 4. Persons working in the media houses and their stand when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination



Graph 8. Media persons agreed that ratio of women in media sector has shown a rise in past years



Graph 9. Media persons get late night assignments



Graph 10. Family supports for media profession

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