

# **Opportunities and Challenges for Women Journalist in Media Industry: A Critical Review**

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## **Abstract**

In the present scenario, Women journalists have played a significant role in shaping the media industry, from reporting on important events to advocating for gender equality and social justice. However, despite progress in recent years, women journalists still need to overcome several challenges and threats in the industry. Gender discrimination is one major challenge faced by women journalists today. This can take many forms, from being paid less than their male counterparts to being passed over for promotion. Women journalists may also face bullying and harassment in the workplace, which can make it difficult to do their job effectively. Another challenge women journalist's face is the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles. Women are often excluded from leadership positions in media organizations, making it difficult for them to have their voices heard and advance in their careers. Women journalists have made significant contributions to the media industry and continue to do so. They bring a unique perspective to news coverage and have helped to create a more diverse and inclusive media landscape. As the industry continues to evolve, ensuring women have equal opportunities to succeed and thrive as journalists are important. This review paper highlights the opportunities and challenges for women journalists in the media industry.

**Keywords:** Women Journalist, Media, Discrimination, Opportunity

## **Introduction**

Journalism has historically been male-dominated, with women facing barriers to entry and advancement [1, 15]. However, over the years, women have made significant progress in the field,

breaking through the glass ceiling and making a name for themselves as influential journalists and media personalities.

Despite these advancements, women in journalism continue to face challenges such as gender bias, unequal pay, and limited opportunities for career advancement. Women are also more likely to experience online harassment and abuse, which can harm their mental health and professional reputation [1, 16].

In recent years, there has been a growing movement to address these issues and promote gender equality in journalism. Organizations such as the **International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF)** and the **Women's Media Center (WMC)** are working to empower women journalists and create more inclusive newsrooms.

There is also a push to increase the representation of women in media ownership and leadership positions and promote more diverse and inclusive reporting that reflects the experiences and perspectives of women and other marginalized groups [2, 17]. While there is still work to be done, women in journalism have made significant progress in recent years and continue to shape the field in significant ways.

### **Historical Perspective**

The history of women in journalism can be traced back to the 18th century when women started contributing to newspapers and magazines as correspondents and columnists. However, their participation in the field was limited and often met with resistance and discrimination.

In the 19th century, women's participation in journalism increased with the rise of the women's rights movement and the growth of women's magazines. Women journalists played a significant role in advocating for women's rights and social reform, reporting on issues such as suffrage, temperance, and child labor [1, 2, 17].

One of the most prominent women journalists of the 19th century was **Nellie Bly**, who made a name for herself by conducting investigative journalism and breaking barriers for women in the field. In 1887, Bly posed as a patient to expose the mistreatment of patients at a mental institution and later traveled around the world in 72 days, breaking the previous record set by Jules Verne's fictional character Phileas Fogg [3].

In the early 20th century, women's participation in journalism grew, particularly in feature writing, social and cultural reporting, and lifestyle coverage. Women journalists played a significant role in covering World War II and breaking gender barriers in newsrooms.

However, despite their contributions to the field, women journalists faced numerous obstacles, including discriminatory hiring practices, limited opportunities, and lower pay for career advancement [4, 13]. It was in the 1960s and 1970s that women in journalism began to organize and push for greater representation and equality in the field.

Women journalists have made significant strides today, with many serving as editors, correspondents, and anchors for major news organizations. However, challenges still exist, particularly with regard to gender-based harassment and discrimination in the workplace, and there is ongoing work to be done to ensure that women have equal opportunities and representation in journalism.

## **Literature Review**

This literature review explores women's role in journalism and the challenges they face in the industry.

### **The Role of Women in Journalism:**

Women have made significant contributions to the field of journalism over the years. In the early days of the industry, women worked as reporters, writers, and editors for women's magazines, but they were often limited to writing about fashion, beauty, and household matters. However, as the industry evolved, women began to break down gender barriers and write about a broader range of topics, including politics, crime, and sports.

**Karen Ross (2009).** Her study on women in journalism found that women journalists were more likely to cover topics related to social issues, such as health, education, and welfare, while men tended to cover politics, crime, and business [6, 15]. This finding suggests that women bring a different perspective to journalism and are more likely to cover issues that affect women and children.

### **Challenges Faced by Women Journalists:**

Despite the progress made by women in journalism, they continue to face challenges in the industry. One of the most significant challenges is unequal pay. A study by the **Women's Media Center (2019)** found that women in journalism earn, on average, 83 cents for every dollar earned

by men. This disparity is even greater for women of color, who earn just 54 cents for every dollar earned by white men.

Another challenge faced by women in journalism is harassment. In a survey conducted by the **International Women's Media Foundation (2019)**, 64% of women journalists reported experiencing some form of intimidation, threats, or abuse while on the job. The survey also found that women who covered topics related to politics and human rights were more likely to experience harassment.

In addition to unequal pay and harassment, women in journalism also face under-representation in top positions. According to the **Women's Media Center (2019)**, women make up just 41% of newsroom employees and only 27% of top management positions in the industry [6,7, 18].

Women have made significant contributions to journalism and helped shape the industry into what it is today. However, women in journalism continue to face challenges such as unequal pay, harassment, and under-representation in top positions. The industry needs to address these issues and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in journalism.

### **Objectives**

1. To find out the opportunities and challenges for women journalists in the media industry
2. To find out the solutions for women journalists in the media industry

### **Opportunities for Women Journalist in the Media Industry**

The media industry has historically been male-dominated, with women facing numerous challenges to advancement and success. However, with changing societal norms and increasing recognition of the importance of gender diversity in the workplace, opportunities for women in journalism are on the rise [8, 15, 16]. One of the most significant opportunities for women journalists in the media industry is the ability to tell stories from their unique perspectives. Women journalists can provide insight and perspective on issues that affect women, such as gender inequality, reproductive rights, and workplace harassment. In recent years, there has been an increased demand for diverse voices in the media, and women journalists have a valuable contribution to make.

Another opportunity for women journalists is the ability to specialize in a particular area of coverage. The media industry is vast, covering various topics from politics and business to

entertainment and sports. Women journalists can specialize in a particular area of coverage, such as gender issues, health, or education [9]. This specialization can help women build a strong reputation as an expert in their field, leading to more opportunities for career advancement.

Networking is another crucial opportunity for women journalists in the media industry. Networking involves building relationships with other professionals in the field, including other journalists, editors, and industry leaders. Networking can lead to job opportunities, mentorship, and access to valuable resources [10]. Women journalists can attend industry events, join professional organizations, and participate in online forums to build their networks.

Advocacy is also a significant opportunity for women journalists in the media industry. Women journalists can use their platform to advocate for issues important to them and their audience [10]. This advocacy can take the form of writing articles, hosting panels, or speaking at events. Advocacy can help women journalists build a strong reputation as a thought leaders in their field and can lead to more opportunities for career advancement.

Mentorship is another significant opportunity for women journalists in the media industry. Mentors are experienced professionals who can guide, advice, and support less experienced professionals. Women journalists can seek mentors who can help them navigate the industry's challenges and provide guidance on career advancement. Mentors can also provide valuable feedback on their work, helping women journalists improve their skills and build their portfolios.

Another important opportunity for women journalists in the media industry is the ability to work in different formats. The media industry is rapidly evolving, and there are now more opportunities than ever to work in various formats, including print, online, audio, and video. Women journalists can leverage their skills and interests to work in the best format. For example, a journalist with a passion for audio storytelling can work in podcasting, while a journalist with a passion for video can work in broadcast journalism.

### **Challenges for Women Journalist in the Media Industry**

While there are many opportunities for women journalists in the media industry, there are also significant challenges that they must navigate to succeed. Some of the challenges that women journalists face in the media industry.

One of the primary challenges for women journalists is gender bias. Despite progress toward gender equality in recent years, the media industry remains male-dominated. Women journalists often face discrimination and bias in hiring, pay, and promotions. Women journalists are often given less prestigious assignments or relegated to "soft" news, such as lifestyle and entertainment, rather than covering challenging news topics like politics and business.

Sexual harassment is another significant challenge women journalists face in the media industry. Sexual harassment can take many forms, including unwanted physical contact, inappropriate comments, and demands for sexual favors. Women journalists may face pressure to tolerate or even participate in sexual harassment in order to advance their careers. This can create a toxic work environment and lead to high stress and burnout.

Work-life balance is another challenge for women journalists in the media industry. Many women journalists struggle to balance their demanding work schedules with family responsibilities. This can create significant stress and make it challenging to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Women journalists may also face pressure to choose between their careers and their families, which can lead to feelings of guilt and frustration.

Another challenge for women journalists is the need for more female representation in top editorial positions. Women often need to be more represented in leadership roles in the media industry, which can limit their opportunities for career advancement. Women journalists may need help finding mentors or role models who can guide and support their careers.

Finally, women journalists may face online harassment and abuse. Social media has become an essential platform for journalists to promote their work and engage with their audience. However, this can also make them vulnerable to online harassment and abuse [1, 2, 15, 17]. Women journalists may face misogynistic or sexist comments, threats of violence, and doxxing (the posting of personal information online). This can create a hostile work environment and make it difficult to do their jobs effectively.

While there are many opportunities for women journalists in the media industry, they also face significant challenges. Gender bias, sexual harassment, work-life balance, lack of representation in leadership roles, and online harassment are all issues that women journalists must navigate to

succeed. By raising awareness of these challenges and working to address them, we can create a more inclusive and equitable media industry for all.

### **Gender Discrimination/Injustice in the Workplace**

Gender discrimination and workplace injustice are pervasive issues for women journalists. Despite progress made in recent years, women continue to face barriers to equality and fair treatment in many newsrooms and media organizations. Here are some common examples of gender discrimination and injustice that women journalists may encounter in the workplace:

**Pay inequality:** Women journalists are often paid less than their male counterparts, even when they have the same qualifications and experience.

**Lack of opportunities:** Women journalists may be passed over for promotions or opportunities for career advancement in favor of their male colleagues, even if they are equally qualified.

**Harassment:** Women journalists may face sexual harassment, including unwanted advances or comments, which can create a hostile work environment.

**Lack of representation:** Women journalists are often underrepresented in leadership roles, which can perpetuate the cycle of gender discrimination in the workplace.

**Stereotyping:** Women journalists may be stereotyped or pigeonholed into covering "soft" topics such as lifestyle or entertainment, while their male colleagues are given more serious or hard-hitting assignments [13].

**Bias:** Women journalists may face bias in the way their work is evaluated, with male editors or supervisors favoring the work of male journalists over their female counterparts.

**Family and work balance:** Women journalists may face challenges in balancing their work and family responsibilities, mainly if they are the primary caregivers for their children.

To combat gender discrimination and injustice in the workplace, media organizations must ensure that their policies and practices are fair and equitable for all employees, regardless of gender. This may include implementing policies to address pay inequality, providing equal opportunities for career advancement, addressing sexual harassment, and creating a more inclusive workplace culture. Additionally, women journalists can empower themselves by speaking out about gender discrimination and injustice and advocating for change within their organizations.

### **Online Harassment of Women Journalist**

Online harassment of women journalists is a significant problem that can harm both the journalist and the quality of journalism they produce. It can range from name-calling and insults to more severe forms of abuse, including threats of violence and sexual harassment. Women journalists are often targeted for their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or political views. This harassment can come from anonymous trolls or organized groups that use social media platforms to attack journalists and undermine their work [14].

The effects of online harassment on women journalists can be severe, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as a reluctance to engage in critical public debates. It can also lead to self-censorship, where journalists avoid reporting on specific topics or expressing their opinions, fearing further harassment.

To address this issue, media organizations and social media platforms need to take steps to protect women journalists from online harassment. This can include measures such as reporting tools, moderation of comments, and legal support [15,16]. Additionally, journalists can take steps to protect themselves, such as using online safety tools, limiting personal information online, and seeking support from colleagues and organizations that promote press freedom and safety.

Ultimately, addressing online harassment of women journalists requires a collective effort from media organizations, social media platforms, and society to recognize the importance of a free and safe press and the vital role that women journalists play in it. Women journalists in the media industry can take advantage of professional development opportunities.

Professional development involves acquiring new skills, learning about industry trends, and staying up-to-date on best practices. Women journalists can attend training sessions, conferences, and workshops to improve their skills and expand their knowledge. Professional development can help women journalists stay competitive in the industry and increase their chances of career advancement.

There are numerous opportunities for women journalists in the media industry. Women journalists can leverage their unique perspectives, specialize in a particular area of coverage, network with other professionals, advocate for important issues, seek out mentors, work in different formats, and participate in professional development opportunities [1, 15, 16]. By taking advantage of these



opportunities, women journalists can build successful careers in the media industry and make valuable contributions.

### **Lack of Policies and Regulatory Frameworks to Protect Women Journalists**

The lack of policies and regulatory frameworks to protect women journalists can have significant consequences for their safety and ability to do their job effectively. Women journalists are particularly vulnerable to various forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, cyberbullying, and threats of violence. These issues can have a chilling effect on their freedom of expression.

Without proper policies and regulations, women journalists may not have the support they need to feel safe and protected while doing their jobs [18]. They may hesitate to report harassment or abuse, fearing retaliation or lack of action by their employers or law enforcement. This can lead to a culture of impunity that allows perpetrators of online harassment and violence against women journalists to continue their behavior unchecked.

Policies and regulatory frameworks can help address these issues by creating clear guidelines and procedures for addressing harassment and abuse. They can also help establish legal consequences for those who engage in such behavior, which can deter future harassment.

Media organizations and governments can take steps to create policies and regulatory frameworks that protect women journalists. These policies may include guidelines for reporting incidents of harassment, training for staff and management on how to respond to incidents of harassment, and protocols for protecting the privacy and safety of journalists who report incidents of harassment.

Additionally, governments can create laws and regulations that criminalize online harassment and provide legal avenues for journalists to seek redress. Such laws can also ensure that perpetrators of online harassment and violence against women journalists are held accountable for their actions.

Overall, the lack of policies and regulatory frameworks to protect women journalists can have significant consequences for their safety and ability to do their jobs. Media organizations and governments must address this issue and ensure that women journalists are safe and protected while doing their important work.

### **Role of Legacy Media**

Legacy media, such as newspapers, television, and radio, have a critical role in promoting women journalists' participation and success. While there has been progress in recent years, women still face significant challenges in the industry, including lower pay, lack of representation in top positions, and a higher risk of harassment and abuse.

One of the essential roles of legacy media is to ensure that women journalists have equal access to opportunities for professional growth and development [14, 15, 16]. This can include mentoring programs, training, and support for career advancement. Legacy media can also work to create a culture that values diversity and inclusion, promoting the participation of women and other marginalized groups in all aspects of the industry.

Additionally, legacy media can work to promote the work of women journalists and ensure that their voices are heard. This can include featuring women journalists in prominent roles, including them in coverage of important issues, and ensuring that their work is recognized and valued.

Legacy media is also responsible for protecting women journalists' safety, including protecting them from harassment and abuse. This can involve implementing policies and procedures for dealing with instances of harassment, providing resources for journalists who experience harassment, and working to create a workplace culture of respect and safety.

Legacy media has an essential role in promoting women journalists' success and safety. By working to create a culture of inclusivity, providing opportunities for professional growth and development, and protecting the safety of women journalists, legacy media can help to ensure that the industry is more equitable and inclusive for all.

### **Best Practices and Solutions**

Some several best practices and solutions can help promote the success and safety of women journalists, including:

**Implementing policies and procedures to address harassment and abuse:** Media organizations can create clear guidelines and procedures for reporting incidents of harassment and abuse and establish protocols for protecting the privacy and safety of journalists who report incidents. These policies can also include providing training and resources for staff and management on how to respond to incidents of harassment.

**Providing opportunities for professional growth and development:** Media organizations can offer training, mentorship programs, and other opportunities for professional development to women journalists. This can promote their skills and expertise and provide a path for career advancement.

**Promoting diversity and inclusivity:** Media organizations can work to create a culture that values diversity and inclusion, promoting the participation of women and other marginalized groups in all aspects of the industry. This can include ensuring women journalists are represented in leadership roles and coverage of essential issues [13, 14, 15, 18].

**Using online safety tools:** Women journalists can take steps to protect themselves online, including using privacy settings on social media platforms, limiting personal information online, and using online safety tools like two-factor authentication.

**Seeking support from colleagues and organizations:** Women journalists can seek support from colleagues, unions, and organizations that promote press freedom and safety. These organizations can provide resources, advocacy, and legal support to journalists who face harassment or abuse.

**Holding perpetrators accountable:** It is essential to hold perpetrators of harassment and abuse accountable for their actions. This can involve reporting incidents to law enforcement or using other legal avenues for redress.

By implementing these best practices and solutions, media organizations and women journalists can work together to promote a more equitable and safe industry. It is essential to continue to raise awareness of the challenges facing women journalists and to take action to address these issues.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, women journalists play a critical role in the media industry, providing diverse perspectives and contributing to the public discourse on important issues. However, women still face significant challenges in the industry, including lower pay, lack of representation in top positions, and a higher risk of harassment and abuse.

To address these issues, media organizations and governments must take steps to promote the success and safety of women journalists. This can include implementing policies and procedures to address harassment and abuse, providing opportunities for professional growth and development, promoting diversity and inclusivity, using online safety tools, seeking support from colleagues and organizations, and holding perpetrators accountable.

By working together to address these issues, the media industry can become more equitable and inclusive, and women journalists can continue to make essential contributions to the public discourse. It is important to recognize the vital role that women journalists play in the industry and to ensure that they have the support and resources they need to succeed.

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