



Behind the



Challenges Faced by
Women Journalists in Pune

Survey Report

By **Vishwakarma University, Pune**

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Vishwakarma University - Centre of Communication for Development



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Maximising Human Potential



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Behind the Byline - Challenges Faced by Women Journalists in Pune

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Behind the



Challenges Faced by
Women Journalists in Pune

Survey and Report

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FOREWORD

The survey initiative spearheaded by the Vishwakarma University's Centre of Communication for Development (VUCCD) under the aegis of Department of Journalism and Communication, in collaboration with women journalists in Pune, represents a profound endeavor to delve into the intricate realities and evolving narratives of women in journalism. This undertaking is rooted in the belief that the lived experiences of women journalists, when systematically explored and understood, can illuminate broader societal patterns and foster meaningful change. At Vishwakarma University, our engagement with society and various communities is not merely an academic exercise but a deeply philosophical pursuit—one that seeks to transcend traditional boundaries of learning. We are implementing our Contemporary Curriculum Project and Pedagogy (C2P2) model, an educational paradigm that reimagines learning as an experiential journey. The C2P2 model embodies the philosophy of 'learning by doing,' seamlessly weaving real-world complexities into the fabric of academia, thereby preparing students to navigate the multifaceted social and economic landscapes with wisdom and resilience.

A cornerstone of this transformative educational vision is the Vishwakarma University Innovation Institute (VUII), developed in collaboration with Professor B.K. Chakravarthy of IIT Bombay. The institute embodies the spirit of innovation as a unifying force that transcends disciplinary boundaries and nurtures a holistic perspective on pressing global challenges. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, the VUII seeks to address critical issues such as social equity, climate change, and inclusivity, thereby positioning innovation not as a mere tool, but as a fundamental principle of existence and progress. The insights gleaned from this survey report have the potential to elevate our collective understanding of the challenges and aspirations of women journalists in Pune. This initiative serves as a testament to our unwavering commitment to bridging the gap between academia and the lived realities of individuals and communities.

Prof. (Dr.) Siddharth Jabade
Vice Chancellor,
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SUMMARY

The survey conducted by the Journalism and Mass Communication Department at Vishwakarma University aimed to examine the challenges faced by women journalists in Pune across various media sectors, including print, digital, radio, and other platforms. The findings provide valuable insights into their demographic and professional backgrounds, highlighting key issues related to gender bias, career advancement, work-life balance, safety, and mental health.

Key Findings

• Demographic and Educational Background:

A majority of respondents (56.3%) belonged to the 35–44 years age group, indicating representation from mid-career professionals, while younger age groups were under-represented.

Women journalists in Pune are highly educated, with 50% holding master's degrees and 26.6% possessing post-graduate qualifications, indicating the importance of advanced education for career progression.

• Professional Experience and Roles:

A significant proportion (46.9%) of respondents had over 15 years of experience, reflecting extensive expertise and industry engagement.

The most common roles were reporters (17.2%), followed by freelancers (9.4%) and editorial positions, highlighting the diversity of professional responsibilities.

• Media Sector Representation:

Print media remains dominant, with 75% of respondents working in this sector, while digital media accounted for 21.9%, signaling the growing digitalization of the journalism industry.

Radio and other media platforms had a minimal representation, indicating their niche presence.

• Gender Bias and Career Advancement:

50% of respondents reported experiencing gender bias in the workplace, while 35.9% indicated they had not faced such bias. The remaining expressed uncertainty, suggesting the complexities of identifying workplace discrimination.

• Workplace Perception and Pay Equity:

31.3% of respondents rarely felt their work was not taken seriously compared to male colleagues, while 15.6% frequently experienced this issue, suggesting diverse workplace experiences.

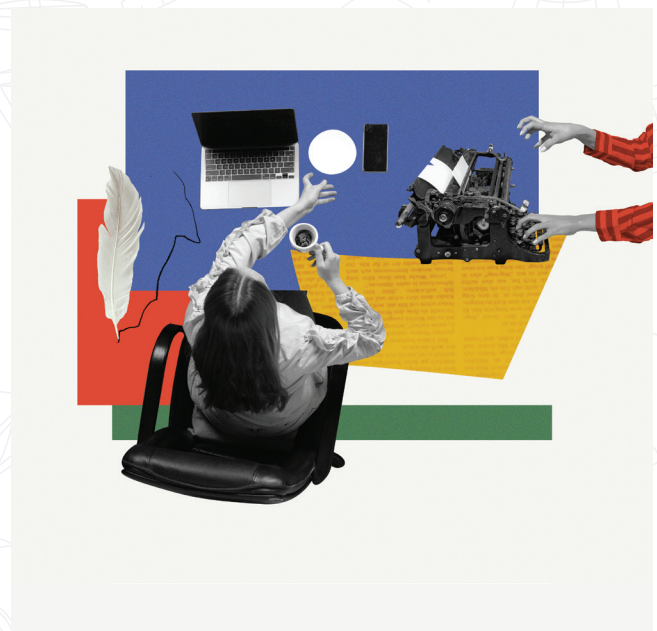
Unequal pay remains a concern, with 43.8% of respondents reporting pay disparities, while 42.2% indicated no such experience.

• Work-Life Balance and Mental Health:

Balancing work and personal responsibilities emerged as a significant challenge, with 40.6% rating it as extremely difficult and 79.7% experiencing stress or burn-out.

Feelings of guilt about neglecting personal responsibilities were prevalent among 51.6% of respondents.

The overall mental health score averaged at 3.28 out of 5, with respondents citing workload, safety concerns, and organizational support as key stressors.



• **Safety Concerns:**

A substantial majority (75%) believed that women journalists face greater safety risks compared to male colleagues.

• **Organizational Support and Policy Recommendations:**

62.5% of respondents believed they had equal access to resources such as training and mentoring; however, 21.9% disagreed, indicating potential disparities in professional development opportunities.

82.8% of respondents supported the implementation of gender-sensitive policies to better support women journalists.

• **Barriers to Success:**

Key barriers identified included gender bias in promotions and assignments, work-life balance struggles, safety concerns, lack of mentorship, and inadequate HR

policies.

Respondents called for flexible work arrangements, gender-neutral pay policies, and stronger mechanisms to combat workplace harassment.

• **Suggested Solutions:**

Women journalists emphasized the need for mentorship programs, flexible work options, improved safety protocols, and more inclusive newsroom policies.

There was a strong call for building a supportive community among women journalists to share experiences and advocate for change.

• **Perceptions of Research Practices:**

Some respondents highlighted concerns regarding the lack of follow-up actions from similar surveys, urging greater transparency and actionable outcomes.



I. INTRODUCTION



The present survey is a result of a collaborative initiative undertaken by working journalists and journalist-turned-academics to examine the professional landscape for women journalists in Pune. The need for such a research endeavor emerged from numerous informal discussions in which women journalists highlighted the increasing challenges they face in the rapidly evolving media environment. In response to these concerns, this study aims to systematically analyze and document the working conditions of women journalists in Pune, with a view to informing future policies and interventions aimed at fostering a more inclusive and equitable professional space.

The survey encompasses multiple dimensions of women journalists' experiences, structured into six sections. The first section focuses on demographic factors to establish a contextual understanding of the respondents. The second section delves into professional challenges, addressing critical issues such as gender bias, pay disparities, access to resources, and barriers to career advancement. These aspects are crucial in understanding the systemic challenges that may hinder the professional growth and recognition of women journalists.

The third section examines personal challenges, including safety concerns faced during field reporting and the difficulties encountered in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Given the demanding nature of journalism, these challenges are particularly pertinent in

assessing the overall well-being of women journalists.

The fourth section of the survey explores well-being and mental health, recognizing the significant impact of workplace environments on the psychological health of journalists. It investigates the availability of mental health support in newsrooms and the prevalence of work-related stress and burnout among women journalists.

The fifth section seeks suggestions for improvement, gathering insights from respondents regarding the implementation of policies and support systems that could enhance their professional experiences. Respondents were asked to identify key areas of support, such as mentoring programs, gender equality policies, mental health resources, and flexible working arrangements.

Finally, the sixth section invites participants to provide additional reflections on their experiences as women journalists. This open-ended approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives and potential areas of intervention.

By undertaking this study, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality in the media industry and advocate for meaningful changes that can assist women journalists. The findings of this survey will provide valuable insights to media organizations, policymakers, and advocacy groups in their efforts to create a more supportive and inclusive work environment for women in journalism.

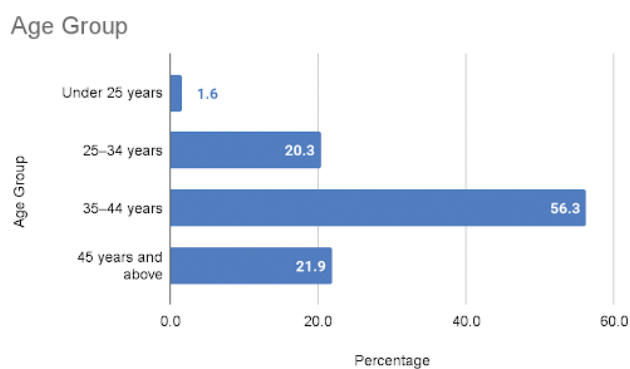
II. DATA ANALYSIS

Overview of Survey Participants

The survey on the challenges faced by women reporters in Pune attracted a diverse cohort of women journalists, offering valuable insights into their professional and educational backgrounds, as well as their affiliations within various sectors of the media industry. The responses provide a detailed examination of the multiple factors that shape their experiences within the journalism profession in Pune. This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the demographic and professional characteristics of the survey respondents, contributing to a deeper understanding of the context in which they operate.

A. Demographics

1) Overall Demographics

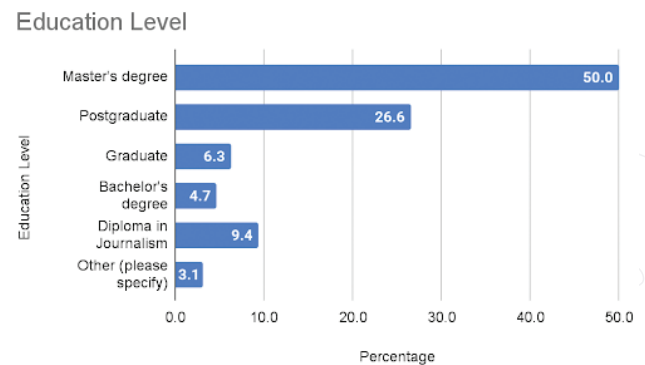


The age distribution of the survey participants indicates a predominant representation of women within the 35–44 years age group, comprising 56.3% of the respondents. This suggests that the survey primarily captured insights from a segment of the workforce that has established a significant career trajectory in journalism. Furthermore 21.9% of respondents were aged 45 years and above, reflecting the participation of seasoned journalists with extensive experience in the media industry. This group offers valuable perspectives on the long-term evolution of challenges faced by women in journalism, providing historical insights into the changing dynamics of the profession.

In contrast, younger age groups were represented to a

lesser extent. Respondents aged 25–34 years accounted for 20.3% of the total, while only 1.6% of participants were under the age of 25.

2) Educational Background

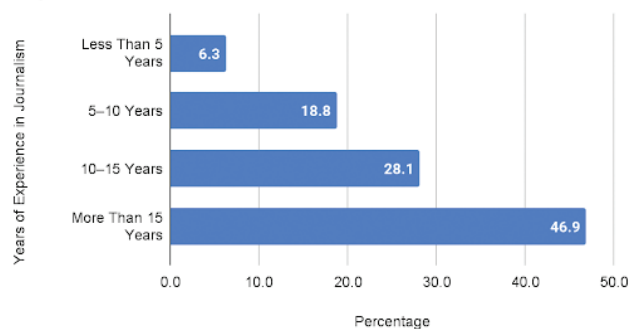


The educational qualifications of the survey respondents indicate a highly educated cohort, with the majority possessing advanced degrees. A substantial 50% of participants reported holding a master's degree, suggesting that higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping the careers of women journalists in Pune. This finding implies that women entering the field of journalism often pursue specialized, advanced education to enhance their competitiveness in a demanding professional environment.

Furthermore, 26.6% of respondents reported possessing postgraduate qualifications, reinforcing the prevalence of advanced academic attainment among women in journalism. The combined presence of master's and postgraduate degrees reflects a culture of continuous learning and professional development within the industry. Conversely, fewer respondents reported holding undergraduate or diploma-level qualifications, with 9.4% possessing a diploma in journalism, 6.3% holding a graduate degree, and 4.7% possessing a bachelor's degree. This distribution suggests that women aspiring to higher-level roles in journalism may prioritize postgraduate education to advance their career prospects, although a minority enter the profession directly after completing their undergraduate studies.

3) Professional Experience

Experience in Journalism



The professional experience of the survey respondents underscores the extensive expertise of women journalists in Pune. A substantial 46.9% of participants reported having more than 15 years of experience in the field, indicating that a significant proportion of respondents have had considerable exposure to the complexities and challenges inherent in the journalism industry. This cohort has likely navigated and adapted to evolving media practices, technological advancements, and shifting journalistic priorities over time.

Additionally, 28.1% of respondents reported 10-15 years of experience, positioning them as mid-career professionals who have accumulated substantial expertise while continuing to encounter challenges related to career advancement, work-life balance, and industry transformations. Respondents with 5-10 years of experience constituted 18.8% of the total, while 6.3% reported having less than 5 years of experience. This distribution suggests that the survey captured a diverse range of perspectives across different career stages, providing a comprehensive understanding of the professional landscape for women journalists in Pune.

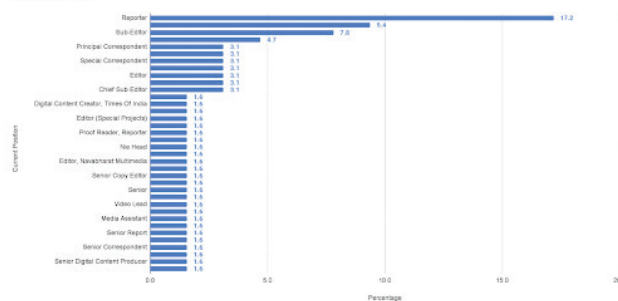
4) Current Positions

The survey respondents occupied a diverse range of positions across various media sectors, reflecting the breadth of roles held by women journalists in Pune. The largest proportion, 17.2%, were employed as reporters,

indicating that a substantial number of women journalists remain actively engaged in the core function of news reporting. These respondents play a crucial role in the journalism profession, contributing to the collection and dissemination of information to the public.

A notable segment, comprising 9.4% of respondents, identified as freelancers, highlighting the increasing prevalence of independent journalism. Freelancing offers the flexibility to collaborate with multiple media outlets, presenting both opportunities and challenges in terms of job security, work-life balance, and access to professional resources. Additionally, several respondents occupied editorial positions, with 7.8% serving as sub-editors, 4.7% as senior reporters, and 3.1% as principal correspondents. These positions signify a higher level of responsibility within the newsroom, encompassing editorial decision-making, content curation, and leadership responsibilities.

Current Position

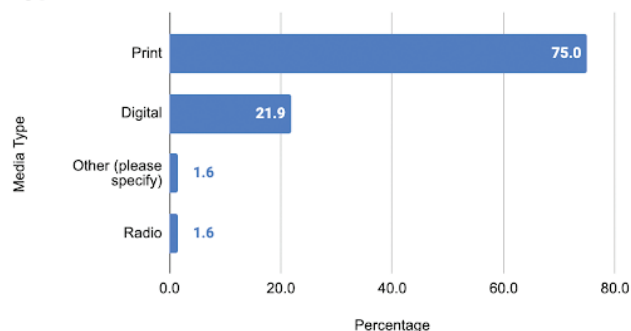


Furthermore, smaller groups of respondents reported holding roles such as assistant editors, editors, and other specialized positions. There was also a noteworthy representation of professionals in emerging roles such as digital content creators, proofreaders, and media assistants, illustrating the evolving nature of journalistic work and the varied responsibilities undertaken by women journalists in Pune.

B. Professional Challenges

5) Media Types

Type of Media



The distribution of media outlets among survey respondents indicates a clear preference for both traditional and digital platforms. A significant majority, 75%, reported working in print media, highlighting the enduring prominence of print journalism in Pune. Print media continues to play a pivotal role in the local media landscape, with established outlets providing comprehensive coverage of both local and national news.

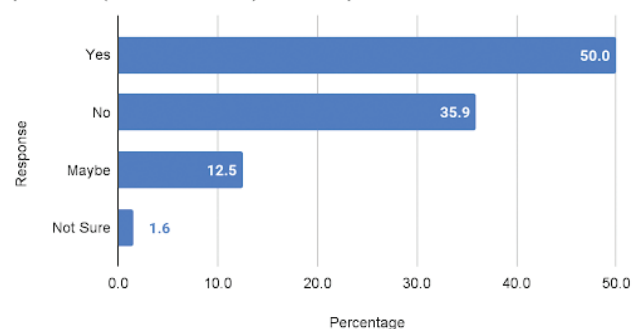
In addition, 21.9% of respondents indicated their involvement in digital media, reflecting the increasing digitalization of the media industry. This trend underscores the growing importance of online platforms in news dissemination, with women journalists actively contributing to the transformation of news consumption practices. A smaller proportion of respondents, 1.6%, reported working in radio, while another 1.6% were engaged in other unspecified media sectors. Although radio represents a niche segment, its presence within the survey responses highlights the diversity of media platforms where women journalists are making meaningful contributions.

The findings from the survey provide insights into a highly educated, experienced, and professionally diverse cohort of women journalists. With a predominant representation of individuals within the 35–44 years age group and a substantial proportion holding advanced academic qualifications, the survey respondents represent a mature and knowledgeable segment of the journalism workforce in

Pune. The data further reveal a wide range of professional experience, spanning from those with over 15 years in the industry to those with less than 5 years, offering a comprehensive perspective on the challenges faced by women journalists across different career stages. Additionally, the representation of respondents across various roles within the media industry, with a majority in print media and a notable presence in digital media, reflects the evolving nature of journalism in the region.

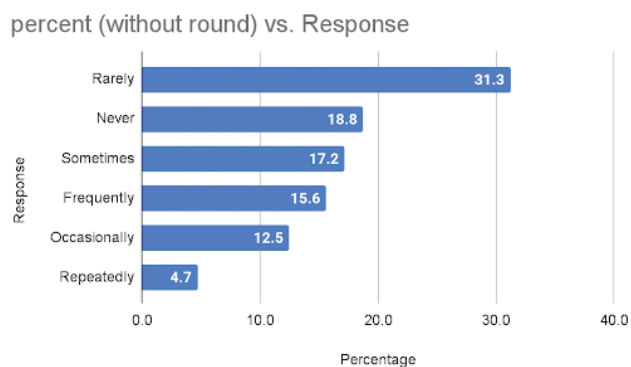
6) Have you ever faced gender bias in your workplace?

percent (without round) vs. Response



Among the women journalists surveyed across print, digital, radio, and other media platforms, 50% reported experiencing gender bias in the workplace. An additional 35.9% indicated that they had not encountered such bias. Furthermore, 12.5% expressed uncertainty by responding with “maybe,” while 1.6% remained unsure, answering “not sure.” These findings highlight that while a significant proportion of women journalists acknowledge the presence of gender bias in their professional environments, a considerable percentage do not report such experiences or remain uncertain about them. The combined responses of “maybe” and “not sure” suggest that some respondents may find it challenging to definitively classify certain workplace experiences as manifestations of gender bias. The data reflect a diverse range of experiences and perceptions regarding workplace bias within the media industry, indicating the need for further exploration to better understand the underlying factors influencing these varied responses.

7) How often do you feel that your work is not taken seriously compared to male colleagues?

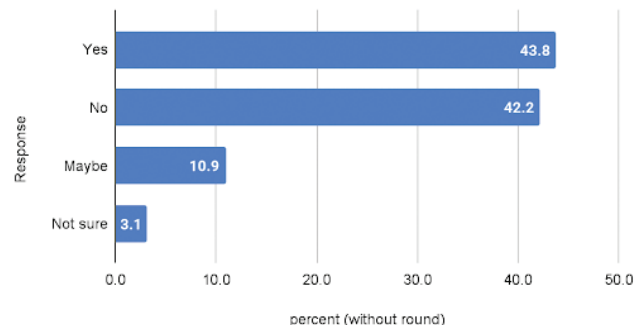


31.3% respondents reported that they rarely feel their work is not taken as seriously as that of their male colleagues. An additional 18.8% indicated that they have never experienced such perceptions, while 17.2% stated that they sometimes encounter this issue. Furthermore, 15.6% reported experiencing this frequently, and 12.5% indicated that it occurs occasionally. A smaller proportion, 4.7%, noted that they repeatedly face this challenge. These findings reflect a diverse range of experiences among women journalists regarding the perception of their work relative to that of their male counterparts. While nearly half of the respondents indicated that such experiences are rare or nonexistent, a considerable proportion reported encountering them with varying frequency. The diversity of responses suggests potential differences in workplace culture and varying levels of awareness or recognition of gender-related bias, which may influence the extent to which these perceptions are reported.

8) Have you faced unequal pay compared to your male colleagues?

43.8% respondents reported experiencing unequal pay in comparison to their male colleagues. In contrast, 42.2% indicated that they had not encountered pay disparities. Additionally, 10.9% expressed uncertainty by responding with “maybe,” while 3.1% reported being “not sure.”

percent (without round) vs. Response

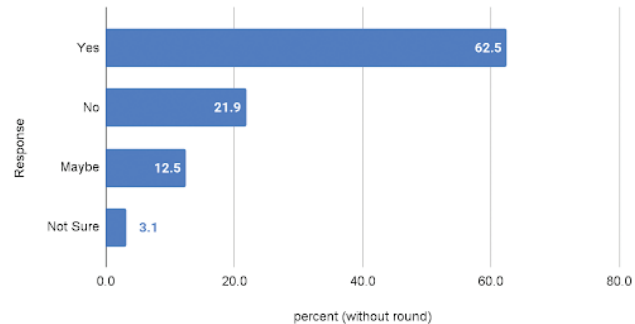


These findings reveal a nearly equal distribution between those who have experienced unequal pay and those who have not. However, the combined 14% of respondents who expressed uncertainty suggests a degree of ambiguity regarding pay equity. This uncertainty may stem from a lack of transparency in salary structures or limited access to information about the earnings of male counterparts. The data underscores that pay equity remains a pertinent concern for many women in journalism, with experiences varying across individuals and workplaces.

9) Do you feel that you have equal access to resources (training, mentoring, career development) as your male counterparts?

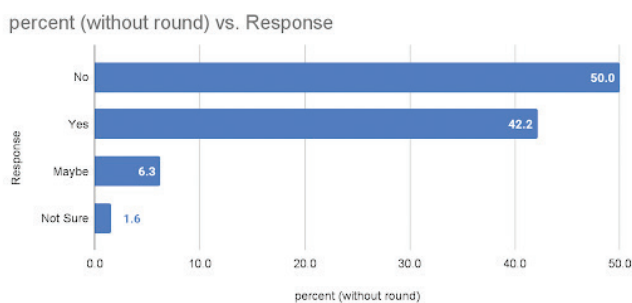
62.5% respondents reported that they feel they have equal access to resources such as training, mentoring, and career development opportunities. In contrast, 21.9% indicated that they do not perceive their access to these resources as equal. Additionally, 12.5% responded with “maybe,” while 3.1% reported being “not sure.”

percent (without round) vs. Response



The findings indicate that while a majority of respondents perceive their access to resources as equitable, a considerable proportion reported otherwise or expressed uncertainty. The combined 16% of respondents who selected “maybe” or “not sure” suggests a lack of clarity regarding their access to professional development opportunities in comparison to their male counterparts.

10) Have you experienced any barriers to promotion or career advancement due to your gender?



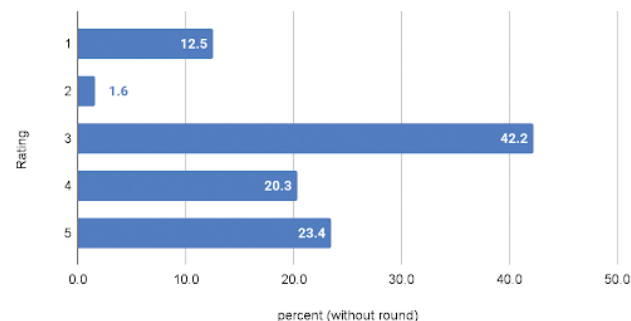
Among the respondents surveyed, 50% reported that they had not encountered barriers to promotion or career advancement due to their gender. Conversely, 42.2% indicated that they had faced such barriers. Additionally, 6.3% responded with “maybe,” while 1.6% reported being “not sure.”

The findings suggest that while half of the respondents did not perceive gender-related impediments to their career progression, a substantial proportion reported experiencing such challenges. The combined 8% of respondents who expressed uncertainty through “maybe” and “not sure” responses indicates a lack of clarity in recognizing or identifying specific barriers to advancement

11) On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your access to training and development opportunities in your workplace?

The responses regarding access to training and development opportunities in the workplace among women journalists reveal a range of experiences. The most

percent (without round) vs. Rating

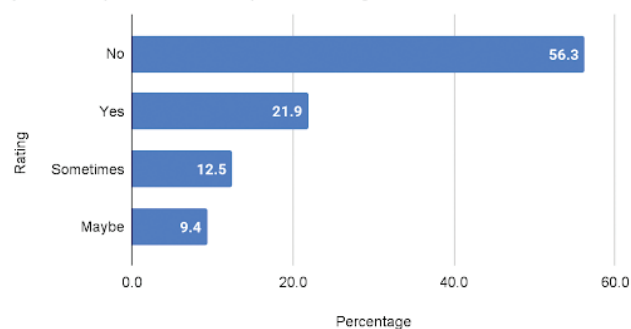


frequently reported rating was 3, with 42.2% of respondents indicating a moderate level of access to such opportunities. This suggests that while training programs are available, they may not always be sufficient or easily accessible. Additionally, 23.4% of respondents rated their access as a 5, reflecting that a segment of women journalists perceive their access to professional development resources as excellent. Furthermore, 20.3% of participants rated their access as a 4, indicating that although opportunities exist, they may not fully meet their professional development needs. A notable 12.5% rated their access as a 1, highlighting a significant lack of training and development opportunities, which may hinder career advancement and skill enhancement. Only 1.6% of respondents rated their access as a 2, further underscoring the challenges faced by some women journalists in acquiring essential resources for professional growth. Overall, while some women journalists report satisfactory access to training opportunities, the findings suggest that there remains considerable scope for improvement in ensuring more consistent and accessible professional development opportunities.

C. Personal Challenges

12) Have you ever felt unsafe while reporting on the ground?

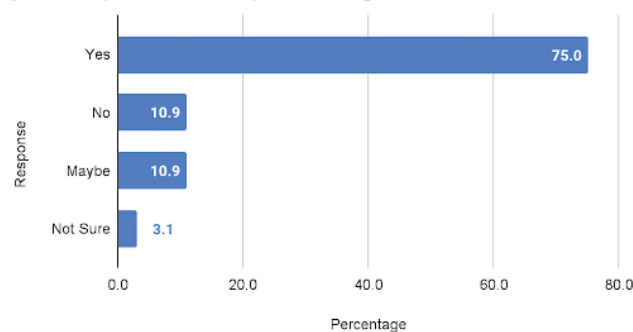
percent (without round) vs. Rating



The responses to the question regarding feelings of safety while reporting on the ground indicate that safety concerns are a reality for a considerable proportion of women journalists, though they are not universally experienced. A majority of respondents (56.3%) reported never feeling unsafe while reporting, suggesting that many women journalists perceive their professional work environments as secure. However, a significant proportion (21.9%) reported having felt unsafe at some point, underscoring the potential risks and challenges encountered in the field. Additionally, 12.5% of respondents indicated that they sometimes feel unsafe, suggesting that their sense of vulnerability may vary depending on specific circumstances. A smaller proportion (9.4%) expressed uncertainty regarding their safety, which may reflect diverse experiences or ambiguous perceptions of risk. These findings highlight the need for enhanced safety protocols and support systems to address the concerns of women journalists operating in potentially hazardous or high-risk environments.

13) Do you believe women reporters face more safety concerns than male reporters?

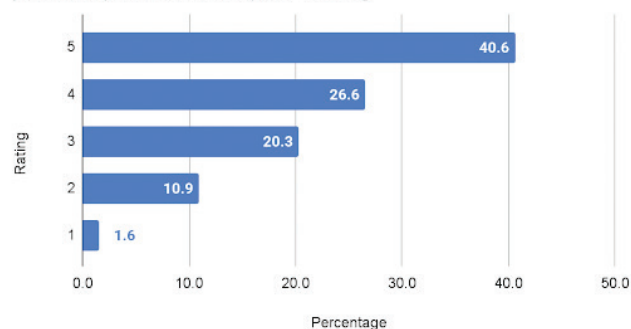
percent (without round) vs. Rating



The responses to the question of whether women reporters face greater safety concerns than their male counterparts indicate a strong consensus that gender significantly influences the level of safety risks encountered in the field of journalism. A substantial majority of respondents (75%) believe that women reporters face heightened safety concerns, underscoring the unique challenges and vulnerabilities experienced by women in the profession. These concerns may encompass various risks, including harassment, threats, or violence, which can be further exacerbated by prevailing societal attitudes toward women. In contrast, only 10.9% of respondents disagreed, indicating that women do not face greater safety concerns, and an additional 10.9% expressing uncertainty by responding with "maybe," suggesting variability in individual experiences. A small proportion (3.1%) reported being unsure, reflecting the complexity and subjectivity of safety perceptions in journalistic practice. Overall, the findings suggest a prevailing belief that women journalists encounter additional safety challenges, emphasizing the necessity for enhanced protections and support mechanisms to ensure their well-being in professional settings.

14) On a scale of 1 to 5, how challenging is balancing work and personal/family life as a journalist?

percent (without round) vs. Rating

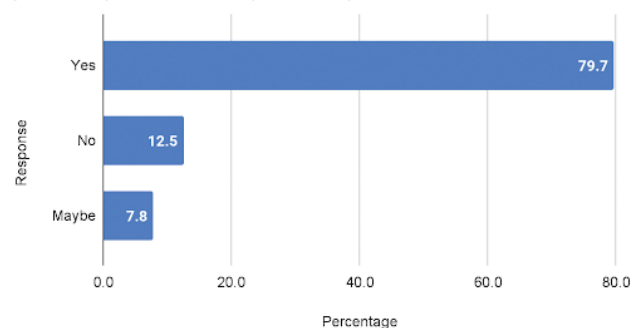


The responses to the question regarding the challenges of balancing work and personal or family life indicate that a substantial proportion of women journalists find this aspect of their lives to be highly demanding. A significant 40.6% of respondents rated the challenge as a 5, signifying that maintaining a balance between professional and personal responsibilities is extremely difficult for them. Furthermore, 26.6% rated the challenge as a 4, reinforcing the notion that work-life balance presents a considerable struggle for a large segment of women journalists. An additional 20.3% rated the challenge as a 3, suggesting that while some respondents find the balance manageable, it continues to pose difficulties. A smaller proportion (10.9%) rated the challenge lower, with only 1.6% rating it as a 1, indicating that for a limited number of respondents, work-life balance is not perceived as a significant challenge. These findings underscore the persistent difficulties faced by many women journalists in balancing their professional and personal responsibilities, which may be attributed to the demanding nature of their work and broader societal expectations.

15) Have you ever experienced stress or burnout related to balancing work and personal responsibilities?

The responses to the 15th question, which inquired whether respondents have experienced stress or burnout related to balancing work and personal responsibilities,

percent (without round) vs. Response

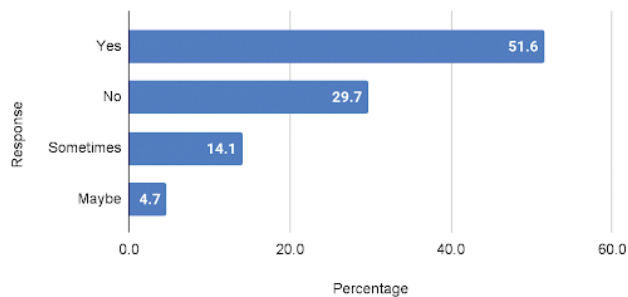


ities, reveal a significant trend. A substantial majority of respondents (79.7%) reported experiencing stress or burnout, underscoring the considerable pressure faced by women journalists in managing their professional and personal obligations. This finding suggests that many women in the field encounter challenges in meeting the demands of their work alongside personal responsibilities. In contrast, 12.5% of respondents reported not experiencing such stress, while a smaller proportion (7.8%) expressed uncertainty, indicating that for some individuals, the impact may be situational or not yet fully recognized. These findings emphasize the critical need to address work-life balance challenges and highlight the potential necessity for implementing strategies and support systems to alleviate these pressures for women journalists. While some women journalists report satisfactory access to training opportunities, the findings suggest that there remains considerable scope for improvement in ensuring more consistent and accessible professional development opportunities.

16) Do you feel guilty about not being able to fulfill personal or family obligations due to your work?

The findings indicate that 51.6% of participants experience feelings of guilt related to their perceived inability to fulfill personal or familial obligations. This outcome highlights the significant challenges associated with achieving work-life balance within the journalism profession.

Do you feel guilty about not being able to fulfill personal or family obligations due to your work?



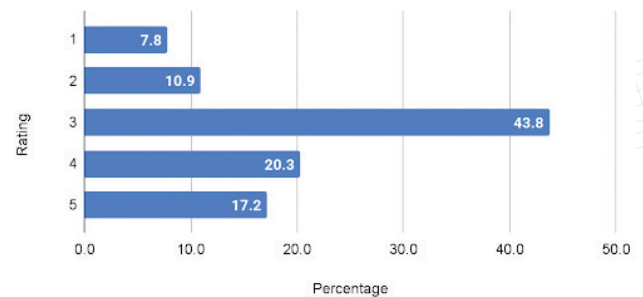
The concurrent demands of professional responsibilities and personal commitments appear to disproportionately affect individuals, potentially resulting in heightened stress levels and diminished overall well-being. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which emphasizes the high-pressure nature of the journalism profession and its role in exacerbating work-life conflicts. Notably, feelings of guilt were more prevalent among younger respondents (aged 25–34) and those with less than five years of professional experience. This demographic may encounter greater difficulties in balancing early career expectations with personal responsibilities. Conversely, participants with more than 15 years of experience were less likely to report feelings of guilt, suggesting a potential development of adaptive strategies or more effective work-life integration approaches over time.

D. Well-being and Mental Health

17) On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your overall mental health as a result of your work environment?

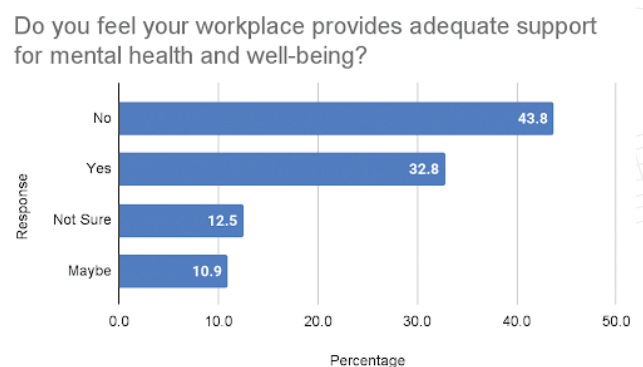
Respondents reported an average mental health score of 3.28 on a scale ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), indicating a moderate level of mental health challenges within the cohort. The distribution of scores suggests that lower ratings may be associated with factors such as high workload intensity, tight deadlines, and safety concerns, which are commonly linked to the journalism profession. These findings align with existing literature

that underscores the adverse psychological effects of demanding work environments in media professions. Notably, respondents in the 35–44 age group reported slightly lower mental health scores compared to other age groups, potentially reflecting the cumulative impact of mid-career responsibilities. Furthermore, professionals with more than 10 years of experience frequently reported lower mental health ratings, suggesting that prolonged exposure to the high-stress conditions of journalism may contribute to declining mental well-being over time.



18) Do you feel your workplace provides adequate support for mental health and well-being?

Do you feel your workplace provides adequate support for mental health and well-being?



The findings indicate that 32.8% of participants perceive their workplace as providing sufficient mental health support, whereas 43.8% do not find the available support to be adequate. These results suggest a notable deficiency in mental health resources within organizational settings.

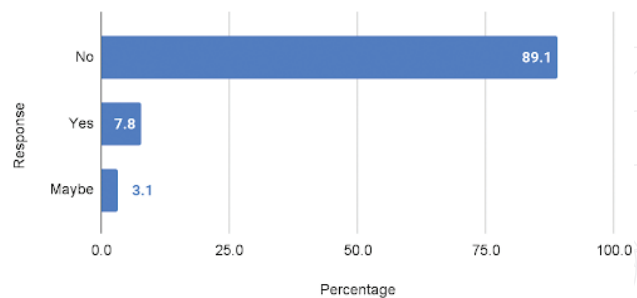
The significant proportion of respondents expressing feelings of inadequacy highlights potential systemic challenges, which may include limited mental health services, cultural stigma surrounding mental health discourse, and a predominant focus on productivity over employee well-being. The high-pressure nature of the journalism profession further exacerbates these challenges.

This evidence underscores systemic shortcomings in organizational policies and practices concerning employee mental well-being. The absence of comprehensive support frameworks may contribute to heightened stress levels, potentially leading to long-term negative consequences for both productivity and morale.

Younger professionals (under 35) and those with less than 10 years of experience were more likely to report inadequate mental health support. This trend may reflect a generational shift in expectations, with younger employees placing greater emphasis on mental health considerations. In contrast, respondents with more than 15 years of experience expressed a relatively more positive perception of workplace support, which may be attributed to their established roles or enhanced access to available resources.

19) Have you sought professional help (e.g., counseling, therapy) due to work-related stress?

Have you sought professional help (e.g., counseling, therapy) due to work-related stress?



Despite the evident stressors associated with the profession, 89.1% of respondents reported not seeking professional mental health support. This low level of engagement with mental health services may be attributed to cultural stigma, financial barriers, or limited accessibility to resources within the industry. These findings underscore the critical need for workplace-driven initiatives aimed at normalizing mental health discussions and providing accessible support systems.

The data reveals that only 8% of respondents have sought professional help, while 89.1% have not, indicating a significant underutilization of professional mental health care despite the inherent pressures of the profession. A majority of respondents across all age groups reported not seeking professional support. However, individuals aged 45 and above, as well as those with over 15 years of experience, were less likely to pursue counseling, potentially reflecting generational stigmas surrounding mental health. In contrast, younger professionals, although still exhibiting low engagement, demonstrated a slightly higher inclination to consider professional resources.

Several factors may contribute to the low percentage of employees seeking expert assistance. Stigma associated with mental health remains a significant barrier, particularly in industries such as journalism, where a culture of resilience is often emphasized. Additionally, a lack of awareness regarding the availability of professional services, financial constraints, and limited access to mental health professionals may further impede engagement. Concerns regarding the potential negative impact of seeking professional support on career progression and organizational reputation may also discourage individuals from utilizing available mental health resources.

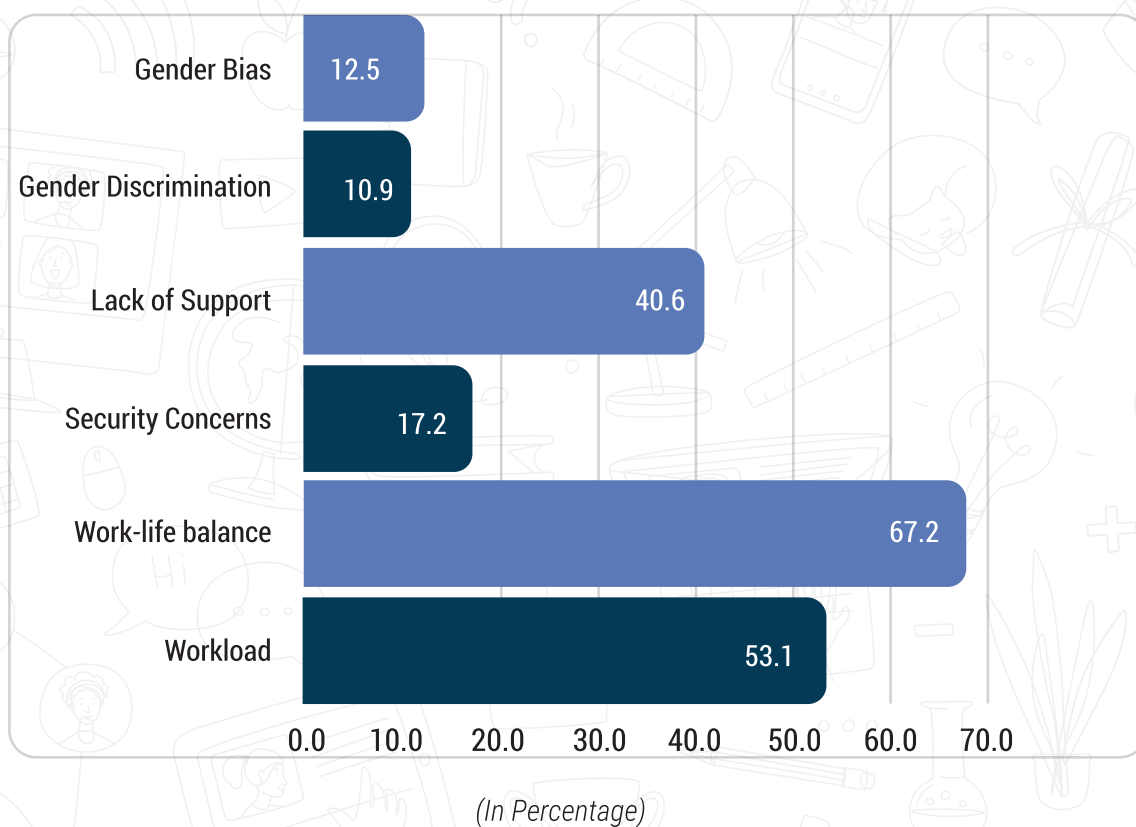
20) What factors contribute most to your stress at work? (Select all that apply)

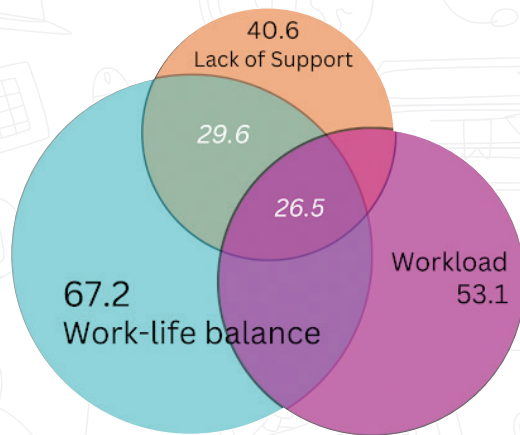
The primary stressors identified by respondents include workload, safety concerns, lack of organizational support, and work-life balance challenges, with work-life balance emerging as the most frequently cited factor. These findings are consistent with existing research, which highlights the cumulative impact of professional pressures and personal responsibilities on individuals in high-demand professions such as journalism.

Workload and work-life balance were reported as significant stressors across all demographic groups. However, respondents aged 25–34 and those with 5–10 years of professional experience more frequently cited safety concerns, reflecting the heightened risks and pressures

encountered by early-career journalists. In contrast, professionals with over 15 years of experience were more likely to identify a lack of organizational support as a primary stressor.

The analysis of stress factors indicates that work-life balance constitutes the most significant contributor to workplace stress, with 67.2% of respondents identifying it as a primary challenge. Other key stressors include a lack of organizational support (40.6%), workload (53.1%), safety concerns (17.2%), and gender bias (12.5%). Notably, workload was examined in relation to gender discrimination and gender bias, with findings indicating a 15.6% association, suggesting potential areas for further investigation regarding attitudes toward women in the organization.





(In Percentage)

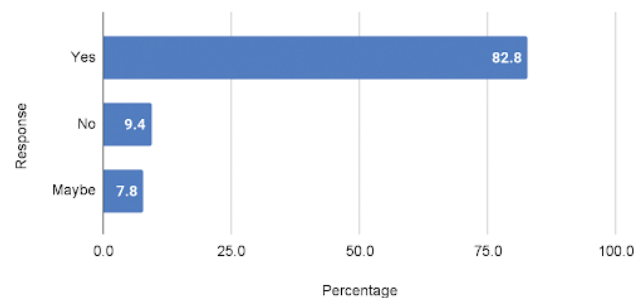
The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of workplace stress, with 29.6% of respondents identifying the combination of lack of support and work-life balance challenges as significant obstacles. Additionally, 26.5% of respondents reported that workload, in conjunction with work-life balance and insufficient support, exacerbates workplace stress. A total of 23.4% of respondents indicated that gender bias & gender discrimination, alongside these factors, significantly contributes to workplace stress.

The prolonged duration of work duties, coupled with high performance expectations and the prevailing culture of constant availability, impairs employees' ability to establish clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives. Furthermore, the lack of organizational support is a critical factor that may undermine trust and engagement, impeding employees' capacity to effectively navigate workplace challenges. Gender bias further exacerbates workplace stress, contributing to the overall strain experienced by employees.

E. Suggestions for Improvement

21) Do you believe newsrooms should implement specific policies to support women journalists better?

Do you believe newsrooms should implement specific policies to support women journalists better?



The findings reveal unanimous support for the implementation of policies through a gender lens across all age and experience categories, with a slightly higher preference observed among mid-career professionals (aged 35–44) and most notably among those with 10 to 15 years of experience. This trend suggests a widespread recognition of systemic challenges that impact women journalists at various stages of their careers.

A significant majority (82.8%) of respondents acknowledged the urgency of introducing specific policies to support women journalists, underscoring the pervasive structural challenges they encounter within the industry. These challenges include gender sensitivity, unequal opportunities, and inadequate safety provisions. The responses collectively indicate a strong call for structural reforms aimed at fostering greater equity and inclusivity within newsrooms.

Despite the broad consensus, a minority of respondents expressed disagreement. This dissent may reflect a lack of awareness regarding gender-specific challenges or a fundamental resistance to policy reforms aimed at addressing these issues.

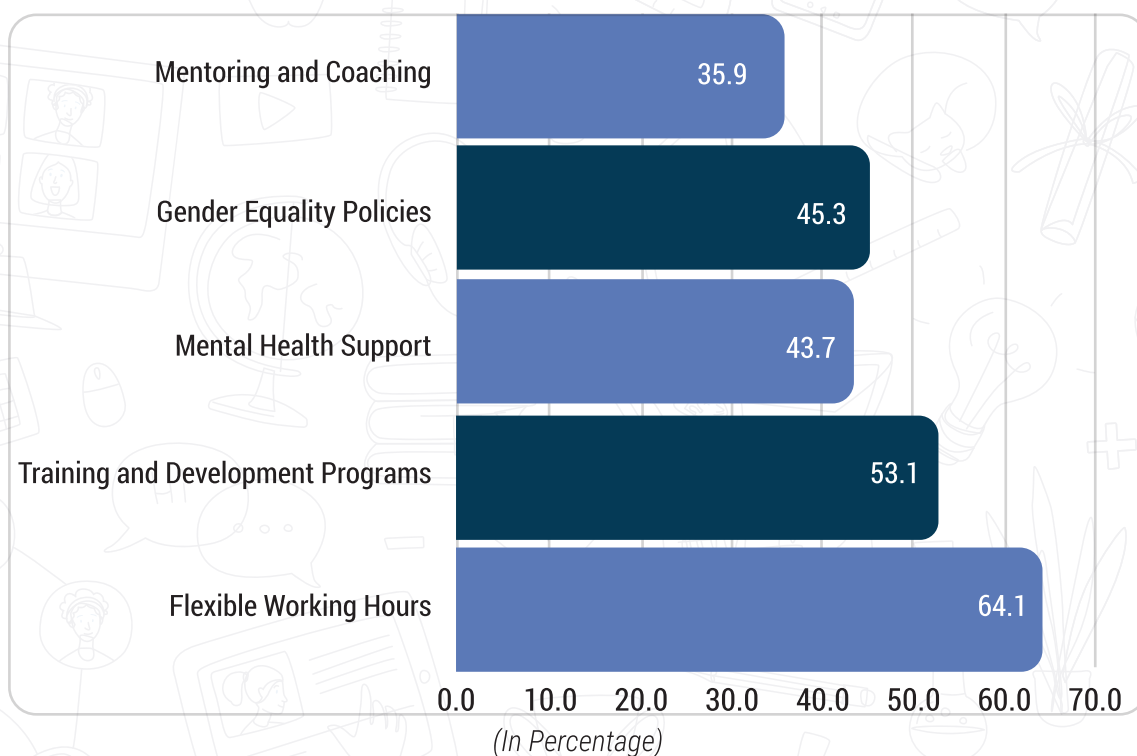
22. What kind of support would be most beneficial to you in your role as a journalist?


Participants emphasized the necessity of flexible working hours, gender equality policies, and training programs, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates organizational reforms with individual empowerment. These findings suggest that the implementation of such initiatives could contribute to increased job satisfaction, reduced stress levels, and the promotion of gender parity in the workplace.

Flexible working hours emerged as the most preferred intervention among respondents with over 15 years of experience, reflecting the need for improved work-life integration at advanced career stages. In contrast, young-

er professionals (under 35) prioritized mentoring and coaching, indicating a strong demand for developmental support as they navigate the early stages of their professional trajectories.

The responses underscore the importance of adopting a multifaceted strategy to address workplace challenges, ensuring that both structural and personal development initiatives are incorporated to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment.





23. In your opinion, what can be done to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women journalists?

The responses highlight a persistent lack of equal opportunities for women journalists, particularly regarding on-site and outstation assignments. There is a prevalent perception that women are more suited for lighter stories or anchoring roles, which restricts their professional growth. The suggestion to “see women journalists as journalists, not just as women” encapsulates the need to move beyond gender-based biases. A shift in newsroom culture to ensure that women are assigned serious beats and ground reports is essential to foster equality.

Additionally, some respondents emphasized that talent and dedication should be the primary criteria for professional growth. However, the existence of implicit biases and male-dominated newsroom structures continues to hinder women’s access to equal opportunities. This aligns with broader discourse in media studies that critiques gendered perceptions of professionalism and competence in journalism.

Pay disparity remains a significant issue, with respondents advocating for equal pay policies and gender-neutral promotion processes. Many women journalists expressed frustration over being denied promotions due to maternity leave or caregiving responsibilities. This reflects the structural challenges women face in balancing family obligations with their careers.

The need for more senior women journalists and female leaders in decision-making roles is frequently cited. Having women in leadership positions is seen as a way to create a safer, more empathetic work environment. This perspective is consistent with research indicating that gender diversity in leadership contributes to more inclusive organizational policies and practices.

Work-life balance emerged as a critical concern, especially for married women and working mothers. Respondents noted that journalism is not a typical 9-to-5 job,

with peak workloads often occurring in the evenings. The expectation for women journalists to be available during late hours conflicts with their family responsibilities, particularly childcare.

Suggestions for flexible work arrangements, such as work-from-home options and better leave policies, were prevalent. Providing flexibility in schedules and allowing remote work during certain hours could help women journalists manage both professional and personal obligations more effectively. This recommendation aligns with global conversations on how flexible working conditions can improve gender equality in workplaces.

Safety concerns and harassment in the workplace remain pressing issues. Respondents emphasized the need for effective Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) committees that actively address complaints and ensure accountability. The lack of trust in existing reporting mechanisms indicates a systemic failure to protect women journalists from inappropriate behavior.

The demand for structured safety protocols, particularly for field assignments, also highlights the need for media organizations to prioritize the safety of women journalists. Respondents suggested that the presence of more women in senior roles could help create safer work environments by fostering empathetic leadership.

The importance of addressing women journalists’ physical and mental health needs was a recurring theme. Respondents pointed out that media organizations rarely prioritize health programs designed for women. Counseling services, yoga programs, and crèche facilities were among the recommendations to support mental and emotional well-being.

There was a consensus that the mental health challenges of juggling work and family responsibilities need to be taken seriously. Counseling services could help women journalists navigate the stress and emotional toll of working in a demanding profession, particularly during critical life stages such as pregnancy and motherhood.



Gender dynamics in newsrooms continue to be a major barrier to inclusivity. Several respondents pointed to the pervasive “male ego” and the difficulty some male colleagues have in accepting female superiors. These attitudes create hostile work environments for women journalists, who are often viewed through a gendered lens rather than being recognized for their professional competence.

Interestingly, some respondents argued that women journalists themselves need to change their approach by focusing on talent and dedication rather than gender-based grievances. This perspective reflects an ongoing debate within gender studies regarding the balance between advocating for gender-specific policies and promoting individual meritocracy.

The lack of mentorship from senior women journalists was frequently highlighted. Respondents noted that most newsroom leadership positions are occupied by men, which limits the availability of female mentors. This lack of mentorship hinders the professional development of younger women journalists.

Networking culture in media organizations is also perceived as male-dominated, often excluding women from informal opportunities for career advancement. Respondents suggested creating peer support groups and mentorship programs to bridge the gap between junior and senior women journalists.

Many respondents pointed to the inadequacy of HR policies in addressing the unique challenges faced by wom-

en journalists. Basic infrastructure such as restrooms, rest areas, and transportation facilities is often lacking in media organizations, particularly in regional outlets.

Policies related to maternity leave, harassment, and flexible working hours are either poorly implemented or absent. Respondents emphasized the need for consistent policies that do not change with shifts in senior management. This highlights the importance of institutionalizing gender-sensitive policies to ensure stability and fairness. Respondents expressed frustration over the perception that women journalists succeed due to gender-based favoritism rather than merit. This misconception undermines the hard work and dedication of women in the profession. Addressing this issue requires a cultural shift in recognizing and valuing women’s contributions on equal terms with their male counterparts.

Several respondents stressed the importance of building a supportive community of women journalists. Women journalists often provide emotional and professional support to one another during challenging times. This informal peer support is seen as vital for creating an inclusive work environment.

Mentorship programs, training sessions, and joint assignments were suggested as ways to foster collaboration and understanding among colleagues. This aligns with feminist theories that advocate for collective action and solidarity as strategies for achieving gender equality in workplaces.

III. FINAL THOUGHTS

24. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a woman journalist?

The responses from women journalists in Pune reveal a mix of positive experiences and systemic challenges. While many women have had fulfilling careers, gender-based discrimination, lack of safety measures, and limited opportunities remain significant barriers. There is a clear call for gender-sensitive policies, better support systems, and community building to create a more inclusive and equitable journalism environment. This question aimed to gather additional insights from women journalists beyond the structured questionnaire. The responses provided were analyzed thematically to better understand their perspectives. The thematic analysis aligned with the responses given by the women journalists in the quantitative section, reinforcing the overall findings.

A recurring theme across responses to this question is gender-based inequality in the field of journalism. Women journalists experience discrimination in terms of pay, opportunities, and workload. Despite working as hard as their male counterparts, they feel doubted and underappreciated.

"Doubt of capability is a big factor always at play. If you are a woman journalist, you will not be considered as equal to your male counterpart. Women journalists get opportunity to cover important beats or issues very rarely, this situation must improve "

"Unlike the IT sector, we are not given equal pay in journalism. At many places, even a basic identity card is not issued to women journalists. "

"There is significant gender discrimination in the field – low pay, more work, and inequality."

The gender pay gap and unequal distribution of beats and assignments are critical issues. While journalism is perceived as a progressive field, these responses highlight that women are still fighting for basic rights like equal pay and fair assignments.

Another theme that stands out is the prevalence of inap-

propriate behavior and sexual harassment faced by women journalists. Many have had to endure snide remarks, unwanted advances, and sexual harassment from senior officials.

"As a woman reporter, you are told to brush off every snide comment made about your appearance, any inappropriate sexual advances made by senior officers in the government, among other things"

"I have experienced all of them myself, and it tends to be difficult to let things go. You can grow a thick skin for stress related issues, but why should you grow a thick skin for inappropriate advances and comments?"

The responses emphasize the need for stronger policies to combat sexual harassment and support systems for women journalists. It's evident that sexual harassment remains a significant issue, and many women are forced to grow a thick skin to survive in the field.

Women journalists feel that opportunities to cover important beats or advance in their careers are limited. They are often overlooked for senior roles and important assignments due to their gender.

"Women journalists get opportunities to cover important beats or issues very rarely. This situation must improve."

"There are very limited opportunities in journalism, especially in English dailies. Despite having a strong wish and passion to work when kids grow, there were no jobs available for experienced women journalists."

The responses reveal structural issues in the hiring and promotion processes in newsrooms. The lack of opportunities post-career breaks (due to marriage or motherhood) and exclusion from important beats are key barriers for women journalists to achieve career growth.

Safety concerns are a major issue for women journalists, especially while reporting from the field. They feel that organizations do not take safety seriously and there is inadequate support for women journalists on assignments in unfamiliar or unsafe locations.

"Organizations must ensure the safety of women journalists when they are out on field assignments."

"If they are traveling to other towns for reporting, proper security arrangements should be made."

"Any additional costs incurred for such arrangements should not be considered a burden on the organization, nor should it lead to the exclusion of women from such assignments"

Safety is a fundamental concern that news organizations need to prioritize for women journalists. The responses suggest a need for structured safety protocols and security measures, particularly for assignments in remote areas.

Many women journalists spoke about struggling to maintain a work-life balance, especially after marriage and motherhood. They feel pressured to change roles after major life events and are often denied flexible working arrangements.

"After marriage or pregnancy, women often have to change their job roles. Instead of forcing such changes, organizations should provide the necessary support."

"Work-from-home for women reporters must be implemented."

"Considering mental health and stress issues, both men and women are in the same boat. Let us sail ahead with a

new perspective in mind."

The responses suggest that flexible work arrangements, such as work-from-home options and better leave policies, are essential to retain women in journalism. There is a call for greater sensitivity towards mental health and emotional well-being in the workplace.

Many respondents highlighted the lack of female mentors in senior positions and limited networking opportunities for women, which hinders career advancement.

"I work on the desk which involves working in late night shifts. The desk is especially top male managers heavy. Find it difficult to have female mentors and networking plays a stumbling block for career advancement"

"I was never a part of late evening or night parties, so I think I missed out on a few opportunities."

The lack of women in leadership roles in newsrooms means that young female journalists have fewer role models to look up to. Additionally, networking culture, which is heavily male-dominated, excludes women from informal opportunities for career growth.

Women journalists feel that their success is often questioned or viewed with suspicion. There is a perception that they receive favors due to their gender rather than because of their hard work and capabilities.



"A woman's success is always looked at with suspicion. There is a general perception that they are favored for being women."

"People, particularly less successful teammates, tend to ignore the hard work."

The misconception that women succeed due to gender-based favors rather than merit needs to be addressed. Organizations need to change the narrative by acknowledging and appreciating women's contributions. Several respondents suggested that women journalists must build a community to support each other and bridge the gap between junior and senior colleagues.

"Women journalists always stand by each other and provide support in difficult times. This strong bonding is very important."

"As a woman journalist, I feel there is a gap among the women journalists themselves, be it senior-junior or office colleagues. If this gap can be bridged, it will help create a healthy environment."

Building supportive networks of women journalists could help address common challenges faced by women in the profession. Mentorship programs and peer support groups could create a healthier and more inclusive work environment.

One of the respondent commented, "I have been working in the field of journalism for the past 25 years. Many surveys on women journalists are conducted, but we are rarely informed about the outcomes or actions taken based on them. I request that such findings be shared with us"

The respondent's comment is a critique of research practices that fail to engage participants in meaningful ways. It highlights the need for transparency, feedback loops, and participatory approaches in studies about women journalists. Researchers must prioritize sharing findings, co-creating solutions, and advocating for policy changes to ensure that such studies contribute to real-world impact and empowerment.

The themes emerging from the analysis of the two qualitative questions highlight systemic challenges faced by women journalists and the structural barriers that need to be addressed to create a more inclusive and supportive newsroom environment. The following are the theme that emerged from the thematic analysis of the responses.

1. Lack of Equal Opportunities

Women journalists are often overlooked for important beats and outstation assignments, particularly in hard news areas.

There is a perception that women are better suited for soft stories or anchoring roles, which limits their professional growth.

2. Gender Pay Gap and Career Advancement

Pay disparity between male and female journalists is a common issue.

Women face barriers to promotions and senior positions, often due to gendered expectations.

Maternity leave and family responsibilities are seen as career interruptions, affecting women's professional progress.

3. Work-Life Balance Challenges

Long working hours, late-evening follow-ups, and unpredictable work schedules impact women's ability to balance professional and personal life.

Working mothers particularly struggle to manage caregiving responsibilities alongside demanding newsroom schedules.

There is a call for flexible work arrangements like work-from-home options.

4. Safety and Harassment Issues

Safety during field assignments is a significant concern. Women journalists express distrust in existing harassment reporting mechanisms.

There is a need for effective Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) committees and stricter policies to address inappropriate behavior.

5. Workplace Culture and Gender Dynamics

Women journalists report toxic workplace cultures perpetuated by male colleagues.

Gendered perceptions and biases result in women being assigned lighter stories and denied leadership roles.

The “male ego” is cited as a barrier to women’s advancement in newsrooms.

6. Health and Well-being

Mental and physical health concerns are often neglected by media organizations.

There is a need for health programs, counseling services, and crèche facilities to support working mothers.

Balancing mental health and stress is a critical issue in the demanding journalism profession.

7. Lack of Mentorship and Networking Opportunities

Women journalists lack senior female mentors in the newsroom.

Networking opportunities are often male-dominated, excluding women from informal career advancement opportunities.

8. Misconceptions About Women’s Success

Women’s success is often viewed with suspicion, with assumptions that they are favored due to their gender rather than merit.

This leads to the undervaluation of women’s hard work and achievements.

9. Inadequate HR Policies and Infrastructure

Media organizations often lack gender-sensitive HR policies, especially in regional media outlets.

There is a lack of infrastructure like restrooms, rest areas, and transportation facilities to support women journalists.

Inconsistent policies with changes in management create uncertainty in the work environment.

10. Community Building and Support

Women journalists emphasize the importance of peer support and building a community to address shared challenges.

Mentorship programs and peer support groups are seen as essential to creating an inclusive work environment.

11. Call for Inclusive Research Practices

Respondents feel that research on women journalists often lacks follow-up or actionable outcomes.

There is a call for transparency, participatory approaches, and feedback loops in research studies on gender issues in media.

12. Stereotypes and Gender Bias in Assignments

Women are perceived as less capable of handling serious beats or high-pressure assignments.

These stereotypes limit women’s access to challenging assignments and career growth.



III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Gender-Inclusive Workplace Policies

Media organizations should implement comprehensive gender-sensitive policies to ensure equity and inclusivity.

- **Equal Pay and Promotion Practices:**
 - » Conduct regular salary audits and establish transparent pay structures.
 - » Implement objective performance evaluations for promotions and career progression.
 - » Introduce mentorship programs to support women's career advancement.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:**
 - » Offer flexible hours, remote work options, and family-friendly policies such as childcare support and parental leave.
- **Gender-Sensitive Editorial Policies:**
 - » Ensure diverse representation in editorial meetings and gender-balanced coverage.
 - » Provide equal access to high-profile reporting assignments across beats.

2. Enhanced Safety and Harassment Prevention Measures

Addressing safety concerns is critical to fostering a secure work environment for women journalists.

- **Field Assignment Safety Protocols:**
 - » Provide safety gear, security escorts, and 24/7 emergency support for field reporters.
 - » Cover safety-related costs without penalizing women journalists.
- **Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Compliance:**
 - » Strengthen Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) to ensure fair handling of complaints.
 - » Conduct regular training sessions and enforce a zero-tolerance policy against harassment.

3. Mental Health and Well-Being Support

To combat workplace stress and burnout, media organi-

zations should adopt proactive mental health initiatives.

- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAP):**
 - » Offer confidential counseling services and stress management workshops.
 - » Organize mental health awareness campaigns to reduce stigma.
- **Work-Life Balance Initiatives:**
 - » Encourage manageable workloads, realistic deadlines, and mental health days.
 - » Foster peer support groups for collective well-being.

4. Capacity Building and Professional Development

Continuous learning and upskilling should be prioritized to enhance career growth.

- **Training and Mentorship Programs:**
 - » Develop specialized training programs in digital media, investigative journalism, and leadership.
 - » Establish mentorship initiatives connecting senior and junior women journalists.
 - » Facilitate networking opportunities to expand professional connections.
- **Holistic Career Development Programs:**
 - » Offer structured leadership development initiatives.
 - » Provide cross-departmental exposure to broaden skill sets and career options.

5. Strengthening HR Policies and Workplace Infrastructure

HR departments must adopt gender-sensitive policies to ensure an inclusive work environment.

- **Gender-Sensitive HR Policies:**
 - » Implement policies on maternity leave, flexible work options, and caregiving support.
 - » Set up grievance redressal mechanisms to address gender-related concerns.

- **Infrastructure Improvements:**

- » Ensure safe facilities, such as separate restrooms, nursing rooms, and secure transport for late-hour shifts.

6. Legal Awareness and Financial Security

Providing legal knowledge and financial security can help women journalists navigate challenges effectively.

- **Legal Rights Training:**

- » Conduct workshops on workplace rights, gender discrimination laws, and harassment policies.
- » Establish legal helplines for confidential support.

- **Financial Programs:**

- » Offer salary negotiation and financial literacy training.
- » Ensure equal access to benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans.

7. Community Building and Networking

A robust support network is essential to empower women journalists.

- **Peer Support and Mentorship Networks:**

- » Establish women journalists' forums for experience-sharing and collaboration.
- » Organize conferences and panel discussions focused on gender issues in media.

- **Collaboration with Industry Associations:**

- » Partner with media organizations and educational

institutions to provide mentorship and skill-building programs.

8. Advocacy for Policy Change at the Industry Level

Media organizations should engage with policymakers to implement gender-friendly reforms.

- **Engagement with Regulatory Bodies:**

- » Advocate for stronger labor protections and equal opportunities at national and state levels.
- » Develop standardized guidelines for gender equity across the media industry.

- **Collaboration with Journalism Schools:**

- » Introduce gender studies courses to sensitize future journalists and equip them with relevant skills.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation Through Gender Audits

Tracking progress through data collection ensures accountability and informed decision-making.

- **Regular Gender Audits:**

- » Conduct periodic assessments of gender equity in leadership, pay, and reporting assignments.
- » Publish gender equality reports to promote transparency and continuous improvement.

- **Employee Feedback Mechanisms:**

- » Encourage open dialogue and periodic feedback surveys to assess workplace inclusivity.



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