

The cases of Harassment and the performance of anti-harassment inquiry committee in news outlets: A survey of Karachi based news media.

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Abstract

Workplace harassment is often considered as one of the characteristics of the workplace. This paper highlights the cases of harassment with women journalists at their workplace, the Implementation rate of Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 and the performance of anti-harassment inquiry committee established at the news organizations. Alongside the theoretical framework of Liberal Feminism and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the study highlights the ground realities of the growing incidents of harassment against women, despite the presence of an inquiry committee in the organization. The research reveals that not all women facing harassment reach out to file complaint succumbing to the fact that the inquiry committee will not offer them justice.

Key Words: injustice, anti-harassment inquiry committee, harassment, inquiry committee, Protection against harassment Act 2010.

Introduction

In order to get an insight into where the women stand in Pakistani society, we need to have a clear vision of Pakistan's society. Pakistan's social fabric is multilingual and multicultural with fewer similarities. Major ethnic groups in Pakistan include Sindhi, Panjabi, Balochis, and Pashtuns, while there are several other minor ethnic and linguistic communities submerged within Pakistani society. Addressing the issue regarding the inequality of women in journalism the veteran journalist Beena Sarwar states in her article at the Neiman Reports: Urdu newspapers, for example, persist in using bylines such as 'By Our Lady Reporter', despite protests by journalist organizations (Sarwar, 2006).

Quoted by Shaami (2010), the founding father of Pakistan Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah seconded the Womens' importance as the nation is unable to rise to the peak of resplendence unless the society doesn't keep the women along its side. The act to put women away is no less than a crime. Moreover, women own the right to raise their status in the light of Islamic ideals.

Our society is predominantly a patriarchal one. In this male-dominated society, women can be found working with a vast variety of professions. There are highly qualified women in white-collar management, management, creative and literary workforce. Women of the middle-class seem to have gained positions at sales outlets and also as café workers. Among the low - income group, women are working for minimum wages and battling for earning their livelihood as breadwinners for their families (Shabih, 2010).

According to social belief, a woman is supposed to be in chadar and Chaardeevani (Ziauddin, 2012). On the contrary, both the genders are the strength of the society which makes it flawless by taking part evenly. Students are enthusiastic in studying journalism and entering the media with zeal as per their choice to become a reporter, news sub-editor or writer/ contributor. But according to an established fact, women face harsh realities of joining

journalism. Their zealous attitude is turned down and collapsed by negligence, restrictions, stereotyping, gender discrimination and disappointing attitude of their male counterparts.

Electronic Media was introduced in Pakistan after the 14 years of its independence. In 1964 the first television channel "Pakistan Television (PTV)" went on air. For another 26 years, PTV continued having a monopoly until a private channel NTM became its counterpart. Then the chain of new private channels began to rise after the Gen. Pervez Musharraf's private channel launching ordinance was released on 1st March 2002. Today Pakistan Broadcast Media consists of 69 operational channels and of which 20 are the news channels, 94 functioning licensed radio channels (PEMRA, 2010), and 402 newspapers from all over the country working under APNS. (APNS, 2014).

Since 2002, after the emergence of private electronic media, it is believed that the number of women entering into the field of journalism has increased many folds. Mostly they are offered the post of reporters, sub-editors, anchors, accountants and in the HR department (Raza, 2013) Women appear to become noticeable in the Pakistani press. There is an influx of women in the media and they're highly noticeable as anchor persons, hosts of the talk shows on a multitude of radio and TV stations belonging to English, Urdu and several local 'languages'. After the relevant legislation and subsequent growth of so many private media channels, the new century has started out the doorway for greater expansion of media, offering improved possible opportunities for women in the industry (Azmat, 2011). Today the girls are way more determined than before, that even if they have to face the worst of the situation they don't succumb to it rather fight it back. (Shaheen, 2015)

Considered as the global issue, harassment against women persists in all occupations of the world. Workplace harassment occurs when one or more worker or manager is repeated and deliberately abused, threatened and/or humiliated in circumstances relating to work (Vaananen, 2013). Harassment is basically believed as a

violation of the fundamental rights of a woman. To curb the reigning harassment in Pakistan, during the year 2010 the Act against the Harassment of Women at Workplace was out and passed by the national assembly. They made it obligatory for all the organizations bearing female employees, along with male employees, to establish an Anti-Harassment Inquiry Committee in order to probe the issue of harassment occurred on the premises. It is not required by the law to restrict to the workplace, but this is effective for all the public spheres as well.

Following the instructions of the act, all news outlets of Pakistan and all other organizations are obligated to constitute an anti-harassment inquiry committee in their organization. It was deduced by constituting anti-harassment inquiry committee the complaints against the harassers will be lodged and incurred under the law. Consequently, justice shall be provided to the victims.

The Protection Against Harassment Of Women At Workplace Act, 2010

In 2010, the government of Pakistan sanctioned an Act against Harassment titled as, “Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010”. The purpose of this law is to ensure a working environment is free from hostility, insecurity and any sort of harassment. To fully abide by the Law, under Section 4 (4) of the Act, it required a body (public or private) to establish a 3 member Inquiry committee containing at least one female member with an Ombudsman under the section 7 of the Act. An ombudsman is “the person who has been a judge of the high court or qualified to be appointed as a judge of the high court (Gillani, 2010)”.

Significance

The incidents of women being harassed in the workplace are a widely heard problem and needed to be laid off. To serve this purpose in 2010 an act against harassment in the workplace was

passed by the national assembly of Pakistan. After this Act's promulgation, all organizations in the country were called for the establishment of an Anti-Harassment inquiry committee.

Talking about the news outlets in Karachi, the researcher aims to explore the contemporary conditions if the news outlets in Karachi have obeyed the law and established the Inquiry Committee. The researcher also finds it important to dig out the fact that if the anti-harassment inquiry committee is present in the organizations, how is its performance? Is it biased or neutral? And why do the women journalists opt to refrain from filing a complaint against harassment?

This research will also provide the beforehand knowledge to the future women journalists about the inside situation they might face in joining the field of journalism.

Literature review

A lot has been written about the reigning issues of harassment that took place at the news organizations, newsrooms and several pieces of research have been carried out highlighting the issue of harassment at the workplace.

Aljazeera highlights the issue of harassment and trolls against women journalists on the internet. The research article raises the subject of women journalists being abused on social media, then they are harassed off social media. Hannah Storm, the director of the International News Safety Institute describes that as compared to male journalists, women journalists are three times more prone to online harassment. (Aljazeera, 2017)

When it comes to sexual harassment, every society has to deal with this ordeal. Not keeping it confined to journalism, so much so the whole media industry is plagued with this curse. Sarmad Ali (2017) quoted the far-famed journalists showing their concerns verbalized the issue. On October 2017 a two-word hashtag "Me-too" utilized via web-based networking media/websites to help

exhibit the far-reaching commonness of sexual misconduct and harassment, particularly in the working environment. It took not so long after people in general disclosures of sexual harassment claims against the Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein. The Me-Too campaign there and then brought forward the issue of uncomfortable working conditions for women around the world as every celebrity around the globe spoke by the card.

In a reply to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) for its examination report, 2017 Pakistan stated the condition and security measures built to assure a more secure environment for women journalists in Pakistan. The report highlighted that among all, 50% of women journalists in Pakistan confront sexual harassment in their workplace.

The research by Safa & Akhtar (2015) concludes Violation of the rights of women is not a novelty in the journalism of Bangladesh. The vulnerability of women journalists is no exception in Bangladesh. Women have to work hard twice as compare to their male colleagues to prove their intelligence and talent. Doing night duty is a task which is refused by not only the women employee but also the employer as well. This is the main reason with which women are failing in equal employment chances in Bangladesh.

Luavut Zahid and Shmyla Khan conducted a study on the surveillance of female journalists in Pakistan. Surveillance of journalists is a global issue, an endeavor to put the freedom of expression at the halt. The research highlights that the threats to journalists are multifaceted and equal when it comes to controversial issues, but a form of surveillance is definitely gendered. (Zahid & Khan, 2016)

On searching about the topic “How much did the news outlets abide by the Law of Anti-Harassment Act 2010 and made the Inquiry Committee within the organization” the researcher found no existing empirical research in bringing out the facts about either the news organizations in Karachi are obeying the Anti-

Harassment Act 2010 or not. International Federation of Journalists issued a rather same kind of report depicting the stories of women journalists facing harassment and gender discrimination in the field. (IFJ, 2017)

The present study is going to be the first one to expose the factual situation about the constitution of the Anti-Harassment Inquiry Committee at the news organizations in Karachi.

Objectives

In order to find out the presence and performance of the Anti-Harassment Inquiry Committee in all news outlets in Karachi, on the basis of preliminary data collection and its analysis, following are the objectives of the Study.

- 1 – To find out if all the news outlets in Karachi have established anti-harassment inquiry committee.
- 2- To explore the performance of the Anti-Harassment inquiry committee.
- 3- To find out why the majority of harassment victims refrain to file a complaint against the culprit.

Research methodology

This piece of research has adopted the Quantitative research method using the Survey as the data collection tool. The survey is conducted at all the newspapers, news channels and news Agencies in Karachi. All the women journalists in all the newspapers, news channels and news Agencies in Karachi were the targeted populations for the survey. The respondents were asked to answer the close-ended questionnaires. Given the tough schedule and lack of time from the journalists at the news outlet, the researcher had to adopt the close-ended questionnaires to get maximum responses. The research tool of the questionnaire was designed on the Guttman or Cumulative measurement scale. The measurement

levels of the nominal and ordinal level were used. Nevertheless, the nominal level was used mostly. The researcher has conducted the survey with the 19 news channels, 14 newspapers and 1 news agency containing female journalists. The names of organizations are enlisted below.

Also, the in-depth interviews were also conducted with the selected female journalists to explore the issues of harassment they face, and about which they are unable to report to the inquiry committee.

News Channels:

Geo news, ARY news, Channel 24, PTV, 92 news hd, Samaa TV, Jaag TV, Abb Takk news, Vash news, Express TV, Dunya news, Sindh TV, Bol news, Neo News TV Channel, Dharti TV, Neo News TV Channel, Metro one news, Awami awaz and Dawn News.

Newspapers:

Dawn, The news, Jang midweek, Express Tribune, Jang, Jang awam, Awami awaz, Dunya, Ibrat, Jehan Pakistan, Newslane, Nawa i Waqt, Express paper, Ausaf

News Agency:

Associated Press of Pakistan

A total of 135 women journalists responded to the questionnaires, making 95% of all the news outlets in Karachi. The other 5% didn't respond or were unavailable or didn't cooperate with the researcher.

In this study, the method of non-probability sampling, i.e.: snowball sampling technique has been adopted, as Patrick Biernacki and Dan Waldorf clarifies that the strategy for snowball testing concedes an investigation test through referral chain made among individuals who offer or know about other people who have

a few attributes/interfaces that are of research concern. (Patrick Biernacki, 1981) Thus, the researcher reached to every newspaper, news channel and news agency in Karachi for the purpose of conducting the survey. The researcher approached all the news outlets, one after another with the help of the chain referral process of acquaintances possessed by the former channel's respondent or bureau chief.

The responses of the women journalists for all queries are statistically analyzed by the statistical package of social sciences (SPSS). In this research, the outcome and results are displayed in tabular form showing the frequencies of the participants enlightening their parallel or different opinions.

Theoretical framework

The researcher has employed two theories to present a solid base for practical research. The first theory 'Liberal Feminism' supports the researcher's plot for women to be provided with the free and liberal environment free of harassment to work in. Liberal Feminism conceives the personal autonomy realizing that women are free to opt for their decisions, not subject to any sort of disabling pressure. The tier of Liberal Feminism states to depend on the state to achieve women freedom through authoritative measures, i.e, uniformity through the law. (Baehr, 2007).

Another theory, showing a substantive plot for the research is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs presents five tiers of theory 'physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization.' The Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs presents its tier of safety and security advocating the concept of every individual has a right to have full safety and security from all threats and protection from harassing elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear (McLeod, 2017).

Findings and discussion

To examine the results for the first objective of the study, the findings are as under

1 – To find out if all the news outlets in Karachi have established anti-harassment inquiry committee.

Table 1

Q. Is there anti-Harassment Inquiry committee Present your organization?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	62	58
No, but there should be a neutral anti-harassment a committee in the organization	43	40
The permanent committee isn't there, but the committee is immediately temporarily formed when the incident happens	2	2
n	107	79
Missing	28	20
Total	135	100.0

Interpretation:

As we can see in the table above, the figures show that out of the total 135 targeted women journalists 105 women journalists

responded to the questionnaire. The data are shown in the table above that more than half of a majority votes in favor telling us that their organization bears an Anti-harassment inquiry committee. While a lesser majority of 40% votes in negative showing the absence of an inquiry committee of their organization, but they also expressed their concern and demanded from authorities to form an Anti-Harassment inquiry committee. A minority of 2% stating the fact that in their organization they do not have a permanent committee, but when an incident happens then immediately an Inquiry Committee is constituted to probe the issue.

2- To explore the performance of the Anti-Harassment inquiry committee.

Table 2

Q: How is the performance of the Inquiry Committee	Frequency	Percent
I am satisfied with its work	40	61
It is biased and I am not satisfied with its work	25	39
N	65	48
No answer	70	51
Total	135	100

Interpretation:

The figures in the table above show that out of 135 women journalists, a total of 65 women journalists answered the question. Deducing the percentages from the resultant figures by 40 women

journalists, the 61% expressed their view that they are satisfied with the work of the anti-harassment inquiry committee structured by their organization while out of 65 women journalists, a lesser majority of 39% are not satisfied with the work of their inquiry committee.

3. Causes of not filing complaint n= 53

Table 3

	Prevalence of injustice	Fear of Notoriety	Fear of losing a job	Fear of Retaliatory response
Reason for not filing a complaint	57%	24%	23%	21%

Women journalists and cases of harassment

The fundamental focus of this study revolves around the harassment against women and its prevention. To surface the ground realities the researcher opted to conduct in-depth interviews with the six women journalists, those who have encountered and agreed to share the cases of harassment, but they asked for their names not to be mentioned. These women were also unable to report the issue to the inquiry committee.

In most of the cases, the women journalists come across some sort of uncomfortable situations that comes into the circle of harassment. A young woman journalist stated her story that she was working as a reporter at the local newspaper in Karachi where at her workplace her colleagues used to stare at her tacitly sending wrong signals with their eyes. The respondent expressed that she was unable to report the issue as it lacks substance and proof to file a report.

A Copy editor at the news channel Aaj TV mentioned that her editor in chief used to make useless meetings with the female employees that were aimed to pass quality time with females. The

respondent further added that once her editor in chief tried to cross the limits and talked indecent, for which she went wild and shut him up. The chief threatened to fire her. But before he could fire her, she herself presented her resignation and moved to another organization.

Another female reporter added that her quick-witted bureau chief used to offer them innuendo about friendships. He would pass derogatory remarks with tacit underlines. The reporter was unable to scathe the perpetrator by virtue of his position. She preferred to remain silent and with another office for riddance.

A female court reporter stated an incident about a police officer's untoward approach for her attention. She was present at the court to perform her job when the police officer standing behind her gestured in a disgraceful manner. She was disgusted. The respondent mentioned that it's generic that women, when surrounded by men, are harassed and molested day in and day out. Reporting the harassment issues at the outdoors seems impossible, she added.

A senior journalist from Geo News expressed her views that the young women journalists are the frequent victims of harassment. The senior journalist shared her experience that she finds it a lot disturbing when the male colleagues around her use abusive language while talking to each other. Once she reported the issue to the bureau chief, but the matter never got settled and she had to bear with the same problem till the last day of her job at the office.

The reporter at an English newspaper complained that some of her male colleagues try to be in close proximity whenever she talks to them. While sharing her experience she mentioned that once her system was having a technical issue, before calling the technician, she asked her colleague to check out the problem. She said her colleague stood close so much so that she had to push him back and ask to leave the desk. The respondent expressed that the

inquiry committee doesn't address such issues and discourage the complainants from coming with trivial matters.

Another female reporter remarked about her time when she was working as a political reporter at the Pakistan Television News (PTV News), she was harassed by the cameraman who tried to touch her indecently. She reported the issue in the office, but she had to leave the channel as no justice prevailed.

Discussion

The rudimentary focus of empirical research is to dig out the facts about the current situation of harassment against women journalists at their workplace. The study also focuses on the performance of the anti-harassment inquiry committee established as a result of the anti-harassment Act 2010. But according to the ground realities women journalists were seen hesitant to file complaints against harassment, the researcher reached out to the women journalists and asked them to reveal the reason for doing so.

Respondents didn't report the incident, dreading about the consequences that should befall when a woman journalist file a complaint against her colleague, her boss and even the labor staff. The results highlight that the majority of women journalists who did not file the complaint against harassment were due to the prevalence of injustice. A lesser majority had the fear of notoriety that's why they didn't file the complaint against harassment. A study by Kamal et al. (1997) concluded the same results that women face sexual harassment at the workplace, but they are hesitant in iterating the issue. The fear of losing job and the fear of retaliatory response are kinds of the similar issues but a slender difference lies here that some women journalists do not report the issue of harassment because they fear that if the perpetrator is the boss, then they'll get fired, or in other cases the perpetrator gets the promotion and the complainant gets fired on the charges of maligning the employee. In such situation the factors of losing job, prevalence of injustice and the retaliatory response occur

simultaneously but the retaliatory responses can be more severe as one of the respondents who opted to remain anonymous remarked that when she filed the issue of harassment she had to face the consequences of either the straight termination or the coercion for resigning in order not to be answerable to others, disturbing calls and messages and the defamation in her social circle. The respondent also remarked sometimes the issue turns so severe that they feel difficulty in getting hired for a job in another organization. The study by IFJ (2017) concluded the same results that women journalists refrain from filing the report against harassment fearing the retaliatory response like stalking and the social stigma deepening in society.

After the numerous endeavors in Pakistan during 2010, the Anti-Harassment Act for women was passed by the national assembly. The Act proved to be the breath of fresh air among working women in the country, however, knowing the fact of the poor condition of law and order in the country. Pakistan is among the countries where most people do not abide by the rules, but in case someone gets caught of the wrongdoing, he/she is punished. This inquiry committee is comprised of an Ombudsperson and a female employee of the organization among the two other members. The findings of this research are eye-opening.

The empirical research study is carried out to surface the real situation about how much the new organizations in Karachi have obeyed the law of Protection against Harassment at the workplace and established the anti-Harassment inquiry committee in their organization. The appropriate methodology was used to conduct the research and further the results. After the researcher adopted the technique of survey using the snowball sampling approach in all news channels, newspapers and news agencies of Karachi, it has been witnessed that a total of 135 women journalists were ready to answer the questions for the survey.

The first objective of the study is to find out if all the news outlets in Karachi have established anti-harassment inquiry committee.

The results are supported with reference to the theory of liberal feminism asking that the women in the field should be autonomous and self-reliant; the state should bring women's liberation through legislative measures. Moreover talking about the Act of harassment against women the theory of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs helps us understand the importance of the legislative Act by postulating that every individual has a right to have full safety and security from all threats and protection from harassing. Thus the study finds out the higher percentage of positive answers, an eye-opening fact was deduced that not all news organization in Karachi have constituted the Inquiry committee but only 58% of the organizations have abided to the Anti-Harassment Act of 2010 by establishing the anti-harassment inquiry committee within their offices. A supplement Editor at the English newspaper Sheher Bano states that whenever some issue of harassment occurs in the office, immediately an inquiry committee is established to investigate the issue (Bano, 2017). Moreover, another journalist Sumaira Jajja from Dawn newspapers stated that she has witnessed the formation of the Inquiry Committee at Geo News (her former workplace) and in Dawn as well (Jajja, 2017).

On the other hand, at this stage the study indicates a lesser majority of 40% women journalists claimed their organization didn't constitute anti-harassment inquiry committee, leaving them devoid of their right of complaint the issue of harassment as per law. A reporter at the Sindhi newspaper R.S complained about facing some indecent behaviors from her colleagues but she found no complaint cell or inquiry committee to register her complaint (R.S, 2017)

The second objective of the research study highlights another important aspect regarding the performance of the anti-harassment Inquiry Committee. According to the majority of 80% of the respondents, the performance of the Inquiry Committee is satisfactory and it has brought justice to the victims. But 39% of the respondents are not satisfied with the decisions and

investigations of the inquiry committee. Sheher Bano the journalist at The News states that the instant Inquiry Committee has never provided any justice to the victims who have filed complaints. Bano says that the constitution of an anti-harassment inquiry committee in the organization resulted after she has fought for the right of the girls at the office and demanded to make a fair permanent Inquiry Committee to serve justice to the victims of harassment at their office. Another journalist at Dawn Newspaper Xali Jalil writes in her article about the unfair response towards the victims of sexual harassment at different news outlets in Pakistan. Even when the complainant filed the issue, as a result, they are forced to leave the job when exposed to sexual harassment. The article “The Media Cover-Up” by Xari Jalil backs the research that even in the big organization like Pakistan Television after complaining the issue of sexual advances from the harasser nothing came out of it except the harasser became even bolder. (Jalil, 2018)

Conclusion

The empirical research was carried out to dig and bring forth the facts about the implementation of the “Protection against Harassment at Workplace Act 2010” in the Karachi based news organizations. With the help of the survey technique, the researcher surveyed all the newspapers, news channels and news agencies in Karachi.

On the basis of the preliminary analysis, theoretical framework and emerging precise discussion, the research results draw substantive conclusions and brought out some promising facts with some down at heel facts in between. By virtue of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs' applicative dynamics of safety Needs and liberal Feminism theory's tier that holds the state responsible for the provision of legislative measures in women's liberation, equality through law. The majority of the Karachi based news outlets have obeyed the Protections against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010. The majority of the news outlets have established an Inquiry Committee in their

organization, this fact depicts a good picture, but here lays a point of concern about the 43% of the lesser majority who complains about the absence of anti-Harassment Inquiry Committee. Another good point brought out by this research study is about the just performance of the Inquiry Committee that investigates the cases of all kinds of harassment in the workplace. According to the respondents, the majority of organizations bearing the anti-harassment inquiry committee have provided justice to the victims. Lesser majority of 39% complains about the injustice of anti-harassment inquiry committee in their organization. This is the point of ample concern, even if the negative response is as minor as 39% the smaller percent doesn't let an opinion be ignored. The smallest of the negative response weighs in and requires to be sorted out. The respondents of the study raised the point of ample concern that a 39% of women journalists express their distrust on the inquiry committee in their organization, as they hesitate to file a complaint and prefer to quiet down. The interviewees stated that their cognition identifying the prevalence of injustice, fear of notoriety, fear of losing jobs and the fear of retaliatory response as the reasons for not filing the complaint against harassment. The study concludes that the women journalists who faced and shared the incidents of harassment in the line of their duty depict the true picture of a highly insensitive and opprobrious environment of the news media for women journalists. The nature of harassment incidents faced by women journalists appears to be of a kind which cannot be reported in the course of the protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010. Even if the women journalists dare to do so, the endeavor goes in vain

Limitations of the study

During the course of this research, the researcher came across some limitations which are as follows:

The researcher had to face the uncooperative attitude of some women journalists. The dearth of cooperation is assumed to be subjected to the huge workload on particular journalists.

Due to the targeted survey in News channels, newspapers and news agencies of Karachi, the researcher had to face delays and was short on contacts early on. The entrance in the news outlets was a challenge.

Suggestions

As the research reveals that the Act of Protection against Harassment 2010 is not obeyed by all news organizations of Karachi. The government of Pakistan is requested to look into the matter and hold accountable those news organizations that did not abide by the Act of Protection against Harassment 2010 and did not constitute an Inquiry Committee.

Also, the Inquiry committee is not offering justice in all the news outlets. The Authorities should make sure to offer justice to the victims by running transparent investigation against the culprit.

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