Gendered Dimensions of Media
Insights from Within

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This article presents the findings of a collaborative empirical inquiry on gender sensitivity and inclusivity within media organisations across print, broadcast and advertising. It is an attempt to understand gender policies within media organisations, map the distribution of gender across different levels and study the proactive measures taken by organisations to create a gender-sensitive working environment.

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A free and impartial media is the *sine qua non* of a vibrant and healthy democracy. It plays an important role in not only formulating public opinion but also in becoming a voice of the disempowered and marginalised. In this post-globalised, neo-liberal era that we inhabit, consumerism rules our lives. The Global Media Monitoring Project 2015 reports unprecedented changes in media during two decades of media monitoring (Macharia 2015). The importance of the print newspaper is diminishing in some parts of the world as content crosses over into digital spaces. Newer platforms such as Twitter, blogs and social networking sites have risen as sources of news and consequently set new trends in the news media.

How have these changes affected media's role as a watchdog of democracy? The corporatisation and commercialisation of media have evoked widespread concerns. There is more emphasis on entertainment media (celebrity and lifestyle journalism) than on serious, development issues. The entry of media managers, financiers and research analysts into the media has necessitated greater interaction between the editors and corporate managers than between reporters and editors. As Ammu Joseph (2005) writes, "Commercial interests override professional judgements."

How does gender figure in this transformed media landscape? Is gender now irrelevant in the present media context? Are marginalised genders adequately represented in media? While much has been written about the gendered representation of women in different forms of media, there have been few studies on the gendered nature of media organisations and the people who create the media content.

Research Studies

One of the earliest studies that examined gender inequality in media organisations worldwide, was Gallagher's (2002) study, in which she examined 239 media organisations in 43 countries. She found that male journalism graduates are more likely to secure jobs than female graduates even though the predominance of girls in mass media courses goes back to 1980, in most of the developed countries. After recruitment men advance more quickly than women. The study describes the masculine culture prevalent within media organisations and how this often hinders the professional development of women.

The International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) study that covered 522 media houses across the world, documented the glaring gender disparity in media positions, with men (61%) outnumbering women (37%) in senior management

positions (Byerly 2011). As opposed to Europe (33% to 43%), women in the Asian region accounted for a minuscule 13% of media personnel in decision-making positions.

A study conducted by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in 2013 to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in European Union notes that despite studies showing an increase in number of women in media, persistent patterns of inequality in the form of under-representation, glass ceiling and low pay remain firmly embedded in the media sector.

In the Indian context, an extremely useful work is Ammu Joseph's *Making News: Women in Journalism* (2005). It brings together the personal stories and professional assessments of more than 200 women through one-on-one interviews. Their voices reflect a gamut of complex issues from sexual harassment at the workplace to marginalisation and discrimination in a largely male-dominated profession.

A pilot survey (2001) designed by Network to Empower Women Journalists (NEWJ), later renamed Network of Women in Media (NWIM), that covered 247 women journalists (Joseph 2005), as well as a study commissioned by the National Commission for Women (NCW) and executed by the Press Institute of India in 2004, on the "Status of Women Journalists in Print India," have shown gender discrimination in recruitment, promotion and work allocation. Apart from the above, other areas of concern were unresponsive organisations that view gender-specific requirements—transport, childcare, restrooms, maternity leave and prevention of sexual harassment—as liabilities.

The IFJ (Indian Federation of Journalists) 2015 survey examined working conditions of journalists and found that in an increasingly corporatised age of Indian media, "beats" continue to be gendered, though there are more women covering every field, whether crime or politics. Gender disparity still persists with only 10%–25% women at top management levels.
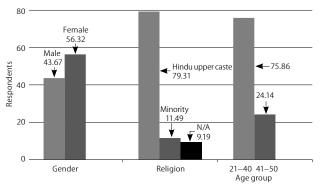
Sexual harassment has been a recurring theme in all studies, with female respondents reporting numerous cases of harassment—verbal, sexual or physical. Most of these cases go unreported due to fear of stigma, backlash and an unresponsive management.

Previous research studies focused only on gender within print media organisations, but did not provide insights into other media organisations, like advertising and broadcast, nor do they reflect adequately on organisational gender policies or prevention of sexual harassment policies. Issues of inclusivity with respect to caste, class, multiple genders and disability have not received adequate attention either. This research project seeks to fill some of these gaps by mapping the following:

(i) Gender equity policies within organisations.
(ii) Gender distribution within organisations.

Figure 1: Profile of Respondents (%)

(iii) Proactive measures taken by organisations to create a gender-friendly and gender-enabling working environment.
(iv) Implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (hereafter referred to as POSH Act).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study covered a total of 36 media organisations based in Mumbai: 16 newspapers, 14 television channels and six advertising agencies (Table 1). The choice of the organisation

Table 1: Names of Participating Media Organisations across Languages

Print Media		Broadcast Media		Advertising Agencies
Name of Organisation	Language	Name of Organisation	Language	Name of Organisation
DNA	English	BBC News	English	FCB
Hindustan Times	English	CNBC TV18	English	Harmony Multimedia
Indian Express	English	CNN-News18	English	HyperCollective
Mid-Day	English	NDTV	English	LeEco
The Hindu	English	Star Sports	English	LoweLintas
The Free Press Journal	English	Times Network	English	SapientNitro
Times of India	English	Times Now	English	
Times Group	English	ABP News	Hindi	
Hamara Mahanagar	Hindi	India News	Hindi	
Jagruk Times	Hindi	India Today	Hindi	
Navbharat Times	Hindi	News 18	Hindi	
Saamna	Hindi	News Nation	Hindi	
Yashobhumi	Hindi	Zee News	Hindi	
Dainik Bhaskar	Marathi	IBN Lokmat	Marathi	
Maharashtra Times	Marathi			
Sakal	Marathi			

depended on its readership/viewership/clientele base and a pan-India presence.

The total number of respondents for this study was 87, out of which 49 were women. A majority (75.86%) of the respondents belonged to the 21–40 age group with about 24.14% in the 41–50 age group. Majority of the respondents (79.31%) were Hindu upper castes with a smattering of Christians and Muslims. A detailed break-up of the respondents' profile (print, broadcast and advertisement) is presented in Figure 1.

Data collection was carried out over a period of three months by 15 undergraduate students who were trained for two weeks in understanding the purpose of the study, methodology and data collection. A pilot study was done to familiarise them with the research environment. A semi-structured

interview schedule with a mix of close-ended and open-ended questions was used to collect data. The interview schedule was prepared in three languages: English, Hindi and Marathi and was designed keeping in mind gender-sensitive indicators for the media developed by UNESCO.[1]

The questions in the schedule covered five sections, namely gender distribution, recruitment and promotion, gender policies, proactive measures to provide a gender-enabling work environment and mechanisms to deal with sexual harassment besides the socio-economic profile. The number of participants from each organisation varied between one and four. Wherever possible an attempt was made to have at least four respondents from different levels (senior management, human resources departments, and at least two from the managerial/professional level) within each organisation, so as to have a diverse respondents' profile and whether there has been effective dissemination of these policies throughout the organisation. Snowball sampling was used to identify respondents within media organisations. We began with some contacts that we had and then requested them for further contacts.

The respondents were contacted by email or phone for an appointment as per their convenience. A detailed note on the study, explaining its objectives and rationale, was emailed to each respondent and a copy of the interview schedule was mailed on request. Each respondent was assured anonymity. Most interviews were conducted at the office premises of the media organisations (some were carried out at their homes/restaurants/coffee shops).

This study used a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Pie charts, tables, bar diagrams, and cross variable analysis constituted quantitative sections whereas qualitative analysis consisted of sorting data that included the main theme, issues discussed in each interview, noting consistencies, gaps, etc. Interviews conducted in Marathi and Hindi were translated into English.
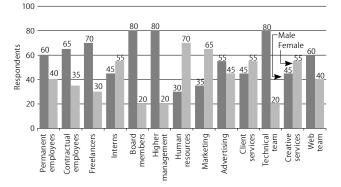
Challenges

The biggest challenges we faced were the lack of response from some respondents—of the 142 personnel contacted, only 87 responses were received—and the apprehensions of a few others, especially the human resources department (hereinafter referred to as HR) in sharing information.

Also, since we have used the method of snowball sampling to identify our respondents, our findings may not be representative of the larger population, but they do provide useful indications of the situation. We acknowledge that the field of media is diverse and does not constitute a monolith. Perhaps, each one of these, that is, print, broadcast and advertising requires a fuller analysis and discussion which was beyond the scope of the study.

Recruitment and Promotion Processes

This section maps gender distribution across media organisations and policies on recruitment and promotion. Gender distribution data was difficult to gather because of unresponsiveness of HR generally, excepting for HR of *Times of India*, *Hindustan Times*, *Indian Express*, NDTV, CNBC TV *18* and FCB ULKA. Hence, we

Figure 2: Overall Gender Distribution (%)

mostly relied on information provided by their senior and middle-level employees.

As Figure 2 shows, there is an overwhelming presence of men at higher levels within media organisations. Thus, the board, higher management, technical and web teams are largely male-dominated. The HR teams are mostly female-dominated except in CNN News 18, IBN 7 and Star Sports, which are male-dominated. Creative services in the print media have roughly an equal distribution of genders. However, the scenario is slightly different in advertisement and broadcast. Creative teams in advertising media have more males while those in electronic media have more females. The client services domain has a tangible difference in gender distribution across organisations.

Criteria for Promotion

Around 75% of the respondents said that promotion policies were based on performance, merit and competence. There was an appraisal system with quarterly and annual review, and evaluation by the head of the department. Ostensibly, gender was irrelevant when it came to promotional opportunities and professionalism prevailed. However, a deeper probe brought out some gendered assumptions that could affect the chances of promotion of women.

On being asked whether the promotion policy takes into consideration gender-sensitive content, less than a quarter of the respondents (16%) said that while they recognised the importance of gender-sensitive content and its positive impact on the reader, they were not sure if that would matter in promotion. Devji Joshi (a 30-year-old working in an advertising agency) was very emphatic when he said, "Gender-sensitive content is not considered for promotion but insensitivity towards those issues is not tolerated either."

Gender and Interpersonal Relationships

A majority (59.8%) of the respondents felt that gender does not affect interpersonal relationships. However 9.2% said that a masculine culture is deeply embedded within media organisations. The presence of a boys' club and a masculine culture have been cited in previous studies on women in media (Joseph 2005; Gallagher 2002; Zoonen 1998). This may hinder the professional success of women. Eric Neveu (as cited in Gallagher 2002) mentions this with respect to French journalism.

This culture includes working late and a fascination for political power games which often garners journalists privileged access to political power centres, something women may balk at. Women either refuse to play by these power games or are forced to play by masculine rules to achieve success.

Ananya Chaitanya (35 years), with 10 years of experience in the regional press, articulates this well:

> Men hang around after office hours and want to be each other's best friends playing table tennis etc, forming a boys' club. They include women in their group but women may not want to do all that after office since it takes a toll on their family life.

Women media professionals report male attitude as the greatest obstacle to their advancement. Often this means a constant pressure to be taken seriously, and "to prove that you are as good as a man" (Gallagher 2002).

Misha Patel (36 years) from a leading English daily has a slightly different view. She feels that community, family and city locations of male bosses matter more than gender. She says,

> Some men are just cooperative, and if they are brought up in a liberal environment with single mothers or sisters, they have a different way of talking to women altogether. But if they come from a patriarchal structure it's very hard for them to communicate with women properly.

Gendered Beats

More than half (70.11%) of the respondents said that beats are assigned purely on the basis of skills, qualification, interest, capability, performance and experience. However, the fact remains that women generally do soft beats like fashion, lifestyle, health, entertainment and men cover hard stories like crime and politics. This was a glaring divide. The reasons pointed to gendered assumptions embedded within media organisations. Vinesh Shah from the broadcast media says,

> At some level, strength really plays a major role … Physicality takes the cake when it comes to men especially when handling physical equipment like camera for instance.

Others felt women themselves choose soft beats like education, health, social sector, entertainment and environment. They pick these beats as they find crime, etc, challenging. Sometimes their choices are dictated by family pressures. Ameya Mishra from a regional television channel says that she had initially joined crime reporting but late nights, visits to police stations, etc, brought immense family pressure and fears of lower prospects of marriage. She moved to the entertainment section.

Stereotypes and protectionist attitude of male bosses also lead to assigning soft beats to women, which are more pronounced in the regional language press. Dharmesh Yevle, a reporter from a regional language press, says,

> Pages that are done by 8 pm are given to women. Basically women have a lot of boundaries like they have to go home, if they are married then they have to take care of their children and family whereas for a male, it is much easier.

For 45-year-old Naitik Dev from a regional language press, safety of women is a prime concern when assigning beats. He says, "When I have to send someone to the field and I think of women, my immediate thought is, what if she faces harassment? What if there is a stampede?" However, with increasing number of women in media some feel things are changing. Mamta Madhok, from the advertising media says that increasingly, women are asserting themselves about beats.

Back-end and Technical Jobs

A question on the presence of gender disparity in on-screen/back end/technical jobs elicited some interesting responses with 9.2% saying that the strength is 50:50 on-screen but in back-end jobs, men dominate everywhere. More than a quarter of the respondents (26%) felt that women are better in on-screen, front desk or client services sections. The reasons cited were natural feminine attributes like credibility, warmth, attractiveness and presentability. Other factors include men's preference for women presenters, especially those with lighter skin tones. A tendency to objectify women recurred in the responses of the male personnel from the regional language press. Armaan Rao from a regional broadcast commented, "Nature has made women more presentable and attractive. They perform comparatively better on-screen so women are more in numbers on-screen and males at the back end."

Selection of Panelists on Television

More than half of the respondents felt that gender does not play a role in the selection of panellists for television talk shows. They are chosen on the basis of their expertise, knowledge, oratory skills and clarity of opinion, position, availability and relevance to the topic of discussion. Two media houses with a different view were the BBC and IBN Lokmat. Their personnel stated that at least one female voice in a panel is imperative to give a balanced opinion.

Thus, gender disparity at different positions is outlined in media houses' gender distribution. Over the years the number of women in media has increased, but it has not led to power tilting in their favour. There are still very few women in top leadership positions. Deeper probes revealed how pervasive gendered ideas are within media organisations even though most would have us believe that only professionalism counts and gender has no role to play.

Gender Equity Policies

The questions posed under this part of the survey ranged from dress codes, equal pay, drop and pick-up facility, dorm facility, separate toilets, childcare, maternity and special leaves, and so forth.

Almost half the respondents (49.5%) opined that their organisation has balanced panels (meaning equal representation of men and women) for the purposes of recruitment and review for promotions. Very few (10.3%) felt that recruitment and promotion were implemented arbitrarily and 17.3% said that balanced panels did not apply to their recruitment processes as HR or editors carried out their personal interviews.

Equal pay: More than half of the respondents (57.5%) felt that they received equal pay for the same work or position while 19.5% said that their contracts barred them from discussing remuneration with colleagues and peers and hence they would

not know. Around 10.5% felt that there are gender disparities in pay.

Different working hours: Almost all the respondents (95.4%) from all organisations claimed that there is no difference on basis of gender, when it comes to working hours. This holds true for both female and male respondents across all three fields—print, electronic and advertising. However, some did mention that men are preferred for night shifts as women's safety is an issue. Hence, there is a possibility that more men than women are given night shifts which points towards subtle protectionist notions.

Insensitivity to single, unmarried women also emerged as a theme in this study. Neha Kapur, a 45-year-old single woman with two decades of experience in the English language press says that work-time flexibility is only considered and granted to married women, but for people like her, who are single and live with their parents (who in her case are aged), there is no consideration. She feels that there is a bias against single, outspoken women as opposed to the consideration shown to married women with families. Women journalists interviewed by Ammu Joseph (2005) echo a similar opinion. They mention how single women are more often the subject of gossip and unwelcome comments than their married counterparts.

Pick-up, drop and dorm facilities: More than half the respondents (64%) reported being provided with drop facility. Organisations, namely Times Now, Sapient Nitro and IBN Lokmat also provide pick-up services. Times Now has women security personnel in every van and in FCB and NDTV, the security personnel at the office are instructed to escort female employees to their cabs at night. The Star group and Times Network group are the only ones to provide both, drop and dorm.

Separate toilets: It was indeed shocking that 8.1% of the respondents said that their organisations do not have separate toilets due to space constraints. Some organisations like Star, NDTV, Sapient Nitro and HyperCollective have separate bathrooms for the physically disabled as well.

Maternity leave: A large number of respondents (89.52%) said that their organisations provide maternity leave. Some (6.97%) were unsure. Around 89.6% of those whose organisations provided maternity leave, stated that maternity leave was paid according to government guidelines, either fully or partially, while one-tenth (10.38%) did not know whether it was paid or not. Since majority of the data collection was done prior to the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, most of the organisations provided paid maternity leave up to 12 weeks or three months.

Paternity leave: Only half of the total respondents (53.48%) mentioned that their organisation provides paternity leave, whereas 24.41% stated that paternity leave is not available and the rest were unaware of this provision.

It is interesting to note that more women knew about paternity leave than men. Less than half (47.82%) of those whose organisations grant paternity leave mentioned that it was paid. The duration of paternity leave ranged from one week, or 15 days to one month and 17.39% said that paternity leave of four weeks was granted, which was the maximum amongst all responses. More than half (54.34%) of those who said their organisation did have paternity leave did not know the duration.

Childcare services: Around 70.93% said no childcare services were provided, around 4.65% said that their organisations were planning on establishing services like crèches in the near future and another 4.65% said their organisations had crèche service and other kind of childcare policies like monetary gifts for the child.

Non-normative Sexualities

A question on employment opportunities for non-normative genders elicited confusing responses. Respondents generally had no idea about employment possibilities for them and were only aware of "gay" and "lesbian" terms. Around 41% felt that professional skills should be paramount and sexual orientation should not bar employment opportunities, yet they were unaware whether organisations were open to the idea.

Building Gender-inclusive Workplaces

The study sought to understand how proactive media organisations were in implementing gender-specific laws and policies and whether effective dissemination of gender policies throughout had been implemented. Questions posed included knowledge about the POSH Act, 2013, their awareness regarding mandatory formation of an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) to look into complaints of a sexual nature, their awareness about members of ICC, workshops or training sessions conducted to orient the employees regarding procedures to file a sexual harassment complaint.

Around 79.06% of respondents were aware about the POSH Act, 2013. However, almost a quarter of the total was unaware or had no knowledge of the act. Interestingly, even today media personnel are more aware about the Vishakha Guidelines than the POSH Act, 2013 or the mandatory constitution of the ICC.

Though a majority, 61.59%, did say that they were aware of the ICC, around 10% thought that the ICC was just a cell for complaints of any kind and not a specific cell for complaints regarding sexual harassment and only around 40% knew about its specific role. More than 90% said their ICCs did not have any external member on the committee and hence was more or less defunct or "useless."

There was a clear gap between regional media and English language media. None of the Hindi media female respondents were aware about the POSH Act, 2013, whereas more than half of the English media (print, advertising agencies and television) female respondents were quite knowledgeable about it as well as the ICCs.

The female respondents from the English broadcast channels and advertising agencies who knew about the ICC and its role and members, were overwhelmingly in the younger age bracket of 21–39 years. Perhaps, their awareness has to do with the training they received post-induction and also because some of these women have worked as a member of the cell or have been associated with it in some capacity. A similar pattern was observed in the English print media where slightly older women in the age group of 30 to 50 years were aware about ICC and its functions and members.

However, the senior male correspondents of regional print media, especially Hindi, were knowledgeable about the POSH Act, 2013, the ICC and its role and members. Male respondents of Hindi and English channels who knew about the ICC belonged to the age group of 20 to 39 years, whereas male respondents of advertising agencies knowing about POSH Act and the ICC belonged to the age group of 30 to 39 years. This could be due to orientation programmes post induction which gave information about all the committees within their organisation.

The number of women in the regional language press is significantly less in comparison to the English-language press (Joseph 2015). For every single woman personnel in the Hindi print media that we interviewed, there were three males. This may also be due to the fact that in metros like Mumbai, women media persons are more likely to work in English media houses than in Hindi or regional media houses like Marathi or Gujarati since the metros were the first cities to witness the entry of women into the profession and today continue to be the leaders in the number of women working as journalists. The fact that English medium educated youngsters may not be very comfortable with the regional language could also account for their greater entry into English media houses (Joseph 2005).

Workshops on POSH Act, 2013

It was disheartening to note that only one-third (33.5%) of the respondents spoke of there being an orientation/training/workshop organised even once or at periodic intervals so as to generate awareness about the law and various aspects of sexual harrassment.

It is clear that media organisations do not seem to have any kind of structured programme for systematically creating awareness on the issue. This leads to sexually loaded comments, behaviour, etc, being ignored and overlooked since women are not aware if there should be a complaint filed and if they would get support from the organisation. However, in such a scenario, it was heartening to find that a very small number of organisations as well as senior respondents did feel seriously about such issues and took it upon themselves to create awareness. The BBC held an organised programme with two–three awareness workshops every year.

Some (18.51%) said that while organisations may not hold workshops or training sessions on sexual harassment policies, guidelines are circulated over email to all employees and conversations around gender encouraged so as to dismantle stereotypes.

Less than a quarter of the respondents (18.51%) said that only a cursory glance was given to the POSH Act and its procedures. An odd slide in a presentation at the orientation was all it merited.

Knowledge about procedure for filing sexual harassment complaints: Almost half of women respondents (46%) and 21% men had no idea about the procedure for filing a sexual harassment complaint and felt they could approach HR if the need arose. Those few who were aware about the procedure did so because they themselves were committee members or knew someone who was.

This section brought out some interesting anomalies. Though there were cases of sexual harassment—and some even reported knowing somebody who had quit their jobs because of unaddressed sexual harassment—the female respondents still felt that they would not face any such issue, since they knew how to deal with such cases on their own.
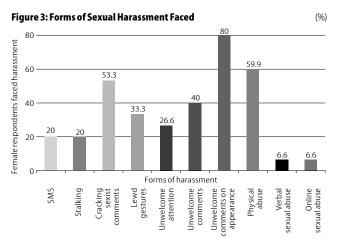
However, these responses were forthcoming only from the English media personnel. The picture is quite different in regional media houses. Here male respondents were more knowledgeable about the rules and regulations but women themselves were unaware of the mandatory constitution of the ICC for prevention of sexual harassment or steps to take if they found themselves in such situations. Surprisingly, certain proactive measures like having a counsellor or constituting an ICC are more prevalent in regional media organisations than English media ones.

An incident that seems to have jolted the media is the Tarun Tejpal case, after which many respondents said that HR had become quite active and had sent questionnaires and guidelines by mail to all women employees. Some of the male respondents were quite dismissive about the POSH Act, 2013 and wondered why they should know details about it, when it was meant for women and even admitted that they laughed about it.

Though respondents, especially in print media, reported that training and workshops under the POSH Act were not a regular feature and were generally vague about it, yet they also stated that as journalists they are supposed to be aware of all such measures.

Most respondents felt that close-circuit cameras everywhere, presence of guards, separate toilets for men and women, late night drops and sometimes early morning pick-up facilities ensured safety. Hence there was a general perception that this environment served as a deterrent to any would-be sexual misbehaviour or predator.

What could possibly account for the low level of awareness among respondents about their working conditions? First could be the high attrition rate in media houses, especially print media, a fact highlighted by Ammu Joseph (2005). Many of the respondents were vague about policies and measures because they had joined the organisation recently after moving from another one. Second, those respondents who work as reporters and correspondents or as photographers and camera persons and are out on beats, may not be aware of policy issues pertaining to gender, if any, since they are hardly in office.

Figure 3: Forms of Sexual Harassment Faced (%)

Any individual may have been harassed through multiple forms of harassment therefore the figures do not add up to 100%.

Third, some of the respondents also said that their work pressure did not permit keeping up with emails, workshops or any other proactive measure taken by the office, leading to lack of knowledge.

Perceptions and Experiences

Respondents were asked a series of questions on sexual harassment at workplace, the nature of harassment, whether complaints had been lodged and if complaints were addressed in a time-bound manner (Figure 3).

The data on sexual harassment falls into three distinct responses. The first of these is denial. A large number (69.38%) of female respondents reported not facing any form of sexual harassment. However, a majority acknowledged an invisible form of sexism prevalent in media houses but often unacknowledged or rather not talked about. It is accepted as a "given." The latter said that cracking of sexist jokes, innuendos, etc, was common and that they did not bother to complain knowing that nothing would come out of it.

The second response is an acknowledgement of obvious forms of sexual harassment ranging from unwelcome comments on appearance, unwelcome conduct and inappropriate touching by seniors to online stalking and offensive text messages or too much uncomfortable attention being showered by male bosses.

Around 30.62% of the female respondents said that they had faced sexual harassment at the workplace. Only three out of 15 respondents who faced sexual harassment had lodged a complaint. Others who were sexually harassed did not lodge a formal complaint with the ICC. The reasons proffered were multiple ranging from "career would be jeopardised" to "it would not serve any purpose." As one respondent from the advertising industry says,

> Advertising is a really, really small industry and everyone knows everybody. If they come to know that you have complained, then it'll have negative effects—because at the end of day, all the big bosses are male.

The fear of backlash, stigma, lack of support from colleagues and absence of supportive institutional mechanisms deter some from pressing charges against the accused. Some felt they should have complained but let it go. Another respondent from a leading English newspaper who ultimately had to quit and now works with another English daily, had this to say

> My boss would slap my thigh and comment on my appearance, about how some days I looked good or if someone was wearing a skirt which would make her legs look sexy, he would always pass unwelcome comments to women around in the office. I should have filed a complaint, but because the other women who were also harassed let it go, I too did the same.

Others found that even the ICC threw up its hands in helplessness since the harasser was highly placed. Peers too refused to support them since their careers could be on the line. One respondent said that she even contemplated suicide.

There is also an "inverse kind of sexism" that is at work, which can be equally offensive—a patronising attitude that can be repulsive. As 45-year-old Kimaya Dayani, working with an English print organisation says,

> Sometimes I find this offensive, my boss would always say "you have worked so nicely, I always wonder how you work despite having 2 kids." I have won many awards and for every ceremony he would say the same thing. Why does he bring my kids in the conversation, especially when I have never asked for concessions because of my kids?

Conclusions

The respondents' profile in this survey clearly indicates a preponderance of an upper-caste, Hindu, male population within media organisations. There is hardly any representation of lower castes, Dalits and tribals. The marginalised genders have an insignificant presence.

Data on gender distribution at different levels within media houses clearly reflect gender disparity. The presence of women camerapersons, photographers in technical sections is dismal across all media.

Some of the respondents were so critical of the use of a gender lens in the questions that it seemed as though gender was obsolete in media organisations and that employees are noted more by their professionalism than masculinity and femininity. However a deeper probe revealed the misogyny floating around.

Beats are highly gendered even though media houses would have us believe that gender is irrelevant in such assignments. Culture, education, consumer news, fashion, lifestyle are primarily assigned to women while crime, business and political reporting is given to men with some exceptions. This was attributed to women's preference for the so-called feminine beats or that women's safety precluded their venturing into crime reporting or that a woman was physically unequipped to handle heavy technical equipment. Here too, we find stereotypes and overprotective male attitudes operating.

Gendered assumptions and stereotypes are deeply embedded within media organisations but are more pronounced in the regional language press. Men play "big brotherly or avuncular roles," (Joseph 2005) being patronising and protectionist. This is indeed a matter of concern, since successive Indian Readership Surveys have shown that the regional-language press have a large readership base.

Women respondents also felt that they were constantly being judged and had to prove that they were "as good as a

man." However, if women were aggressive it was perceived as arrogance, whereas the same was overlooked in a man. Thus there seems to be a tension between what Zoonen (1998) calls "the requirements of objective and detached professional values and the cultural demands one faces as a woman."

The lack of awareness among media personnel about their rights with respect to various policies is appalling and the reluctance to use them is disheartening amongst those who are aware of institutional mechanisms and procedures. While the number of women in media is definitely on the rise, it has still not translated into organisations having structured programmes for creating awareness of sensitive issues like sexual harassment.

Increase in women media professionals and subsequent feminisation of media does not necessarily translate into less sexism in media content or an increasing feminist consciousness since organisational content, socialisation of reporters and journalistic routines play an important part in imbalances in gender portrayal in media content.

When it comes to gender-sensitive policies, very few organisations have little to offer other than the legally mandated policies like maternity leave for instance. Even here there are disparities with some offering fully paid three months maternity leave and others six months. Paternity leave of course is a mere token ranging from one week and 15 days to one month. There seemed to be an unwritten code in some media houses about losing out on career benefits like promotion and other incentives following maternity leave.

We did notice some difference between print, advertising and broadcast. The advertising media appeared more sensitive with respect to gender policies and attitudes, with greater awareness of working conditions and progressive gender policies that reflect their sensitivities to structural inequities within the system. These policies seek to provide a gender-enabling environment and mitigate the gendered consequences of their work life.[2] These include organisations like SapientNitro, FCB Interface and Hypercollective in the advertising media, Star and NDTV in broadcast and BBC in print.

There is no easy way of dismantling the gendered assumptions and cultural stereotypes that are deeply embedded within media organisations. While we agree that sexism within workplaces cannot be delinked from the larger forces of misogyny and patriarchy that have deep roots within the social structure, the fact remains that media, being a watchdog of democracy has a greater responsibility to shoulder and must pay greater attention to issues of gender and justice and equity.

NOTES

1 Indicators include proportion of men and women across different levels within media organisations, gender-sensitive policies on recruitment and promotion, sexual harassment complaint and redressal mechanisms, childcare and parental leave policies, resources for gender-sensitive reporting like manuals and guidebooks etc.

2 Some of these policies include six month half-paid leave in addition to the legally mandated six month fully paid maternity leave. Return from maternity is another policy. Women employees can switch to three days a week or choose to work half days. Computer screens of the employees placed strategically so as to pre-empt the possibility of viewing obscene things on-screen that might make women uncomfortable, courses on gender sensitivity and "no discrimination against transgender employees" that employees have to complete.

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