

# Socio-Cultural Problems of Working Women in the Media Industry of Hyderabad, Pakistan

Saeedah Shah<sup>1\*</sup>, Aijaz Ali Wassan<sup>2</sup> and Nagina Parveen<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

*Pakistan is the country where women workers face socio-cultural problems in the every field. But media field is a level head that brings more problems and challenges for them. The several research papers conclude with findings that Pakistan is not a suitable country for media working women. The numerous working women in the media sector of Hyderabad were unattended. Sadly to write that there was no thorough research ever conducted on their socio-cultural problems. Hence, the qualitative research, with a purposive sampling method was conducted on socio-cultural problems of working women. Initially, 40 participants' list was prepared from both print and electronic media, but later 20 participants were purposively short-listed for in-depth interviews. Moreover, the interviews were recorded in local languages: Sindhi and Urdu. The research revealed that they were pressurized, hindered, and misbehaved when they came into the field of media. The study exhibited that family members' prejudice and pressure, society's bad comments and wrong perceptions, males' stereotype thinking, and overload of work were the topmost socio-cultural problems that women face in their entire media career. Moreover, they are considered an immoral, and receive the fewer marriage proposals. Mostly media women face problems from their families. So, such the families should support and encourage them. Though laws are present, yet unimplemented. Law enforcement agencies should strictly implement the available laws that protect women inside and outside the working environment.*

**Keywords:** Socio-Cultural Problems; Family; Society; Stereotype Thinking; Depression.

## 1. Introduction

Human beings are advancing day by day, have stepped on the moon, and are further exploring. Though human beings are getting developed slowly and gradually in all fields, the mentality of men in our society is still stereotyped as women. One of the theories discusses the stereotypical thinking of a society that needs to see females as housewives who should give the services in household works only (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). Sekaquaptewa and Thompson (2002) mentioned a common thinking approach of a society that females are fit in the traditional works. The purpose of their (women) coming

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Sociology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Sociology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.

\*)Corresponding Author.

Email: [saeedashah6@gmail.com](mailto:saeedashah6@gmail.com)

into the world is to look after the house and do household work. They are discouraged and unsupported in case they try to work out of home. In a similar context, Hardin and Shain (2005) stated males regard them as their property.

The modern world offers job opportunities in bundles for everyone. All types of jobs are safe and secure for men, but it is a quite different situation in the case of women. Among all jobs, media is contemplated an unsuitable and insecure for women. Though media profession is full of glamor and charm, nevertheless; it is perceived to be an inappropriate and hazardous for women. Our society discourages women when they want to enter the media field. Their family feels the uncomfortable and suspicious about women when they join the media. In other words, they are not trustworthy in front of their family. What their family thinks is better, safe, and secure for them is to stay inside the four walls. Besides, the various blocks are created on their road to success (Sultana, 2010).

Working women in the media industry face the problems at the workplace, at a home, and in the society. The home is a first place where they are differentiated, and are considered inferior to men. Unequitable treatment of women affects their progress and opportunities badly in the future. It is rightly analyzed by (Nart & Batur, 2014) that, work-family conflict may have a significant impact on the performance of media women employees. In nutshell, unnumbered surveys support the fact that a greater number of females continue to be restless, frustrated, and unsatisfied in their working careers. Keeping all these facts, this study is launched to find out the practical grounds for socio-cultural problems of working women in the media industry of Hyderabad.

## **2. Literature Review**

Rehmat (2017) stated the problems of women working in media that are varied from pestering co-workers to social and cultural limitations. Nusrat (July 13, 2018) has researched the problems of media women in Pakistan. As to her, some of the major problems encompass threats of violence, harassment, pessimistic societal behaviors, and a noteworthy pay gap. She argues that social pressure is a universally acknowledged an issue for media female workers. Large number of females feels derided as 'bad women' due to their selection in this profession (journalism). Some are perceived as a loose character or immoral; while others feel their families are the despondent with them for their decision of joining the customarily male-overwhelmed world of media. Their presence in media organizations is an unbearable for a society who does not accept it easily because in the eye of most Pakistani masses, media is neither honorable nor a reasonable place for women to work (Kamran et al., 16 July 2018). The other social problem, they face is when the media portrays them as tempting objects. One of the articles lashes out at the media industry by mentioning media industry presents the girls in advertisements as the sexual objects for men in order to accomplish the goals of increasing the sale of their products (Smith-Hefner, 1993). This is also stated (Murtiningsih

& Ikom, 2017) that media advertises and cashes women's physical appearance. The outer beauty of women is utilized to appeal audience and sell products. Women actresses are not depicted as the leaders or intellectuals by the media. The superiority of male actors is clear and crystal in movies and dramas. Kane (2012) sums up "Gender as a social structure continues to limit opportunities and lead to an inequitable distribution of social resources; the groundwork of those limitations and inequalities begins in childhood" (p-199).

### **3. Methodology**

This research adopted a qualitative method. It is elaborated by Denzin and Lincoln (2013) that the qualitative method is the most ideal to trace out the value and strategies of a social activity. It is an exploratory method and is conducted at a specific workplace for study participants (Creswell, 2014). It allows an informant to talk freely and comprehensively in in-depth interviews (Patton, 2015).

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The research design has been considered the general technique that helps in coordinating the various segments of the research in an intelligible and rational manner so that the research problem will be addressed successfully. The current research applied the flexible and emergent research design because it is a common design that researchers follow in the practical studies (Robson & McCartan 2016; Brinkmann & Kvale 2015).

#### **3.2. Study Area**

Hyderabad, which is one of the famous cities in Pakistan, was selected as a study area for the present research. There are all types of media houses in the district. The total numbers of media houses in the district are sixty-three (63).

#### **3.3. Pilot Study**

The researcher conducted a pilot study. For this purpose, three informants were selected purposively from the different media houses in Hyderabad. These informants helped in the selection process. Ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the selected participants, detailed interviews were conducted at the convenient locations. Interviews were recorded with their consent. Local languages, i.e., Urdu and Sindh - were used while recording interviews. With the help of Thematic Analysis (TA), themes were developed from the original records. Later, the researcher translated these themes and categories into English on a primary basis. All the interviewed records of Urdu and Sindhi were translated into English and shown to the study guide to check constancy with research aims.

#### **3.4. Study Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Method**

In the media places of Hyderabad, more than one hundred women are working. The participants of current research include female individuals who

live in Hyderabad division. To scrutinize the samples for this study, the data of all female workers were collected from the various offices of media, such as Mehran TV, Information Department, Associated Press of Pakistan, Ibrat Newspaper, Sindh Akhbar, and Indus Online Tv. Later, the collected data were sorted out, and opted to the interview informants from them. An initial meeting was conducted with all the participants before conducting a formal interview. However, meeting with these individuals was the crucial to decide the sample size of the research, as well. The researcher intended to collect data from 10 to 40 participants. However, data saturation was 20 participants. The participants were selected with the help and support of The Deputy Director of the Information Department, Senior News Caster of Mehran TV, and Journalist of The Daily Kawish Newspaper. The study scholar explained the goal and importance of the topic that was under research to gatekeepers so as to take them in confidence. All ethics related to the research were briefed to them. The researcher also informed them about the process of interviewing eligible participants.

As far as the sampling method is concerned, the research applies the purposive sampling method. It is deemed the most suitable method since it allows flexibility in the overall sampling procedure.

### **3.5. Data Collection**

The data collection process was completed through an in-depth interview method and triangulated through non-participant observation. Before starting interviews, formal permission (informed consent) from participants was gained. The researcher got the informal consent from participants. In order to follow the standard of moral codes, the researcher kept up a definite data sheet that encompassed a complete detail about the researcher, the study aims and objectives; study project, and its potential results. Besides this, time duration, interview procedure, voice recording during the interview, and voluntary appearance in the interview were lucidly elaborated on the information page. The participants were allowed free will to pose any query or question during the interview. It had also made them clear that they could quiet the interview at any time if they wanted to. The datasheet provided the essential information, such as contact numbers of the study guide and scholar, in case of posing or sharing any question or information with respect to the research. The datasheet was written in English, Urdu, and Sindhi and distributed among informants according to their preference of language.

### **3.6. Data Processing and Analysis**

As far as the processing of data is considered, this process was started from the initial stages with a recording of the interview in the course of data collection. Everyone conducted an interview- was saved on the analyst's cell phone. Later, the recorded sound clips were listened to attentively and brought into a written form (transcribed verbatim). Each transcript was protected with a unique label. The covering page was designed in such a way that showed all

valuable information related to the interviewees, for example, their names, location, interview date and time, etc.

Data Analysis was completed with the thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze collected data since it has been viewed as a solid method to produce ideas or themes out of the profound descriptions (Boyatzis 1998; Braun and Clarke 2006) that were gained from the interviewees on working problems and their determinants.

### **3.7. Ethical Consideration**

It is an incumbent on a researcher who discusses the human subjects, to guarantee the morals or ethics of interviewees. The validity and reliability of the results and the entire research can be assured because the scholar worked under the fundamental standards of ethics or morals during connecting with human subjects in the research process. This study, indeed, pursues strictly moral standards consistent with the ethics prescribed by the British Sociological Association (BSA) in its Statement of Ethical Practice record (British Sociological Association 2017).

## **4. Results and Discussion**

This is an analytical chapter written based on the In-depth Interviews (Ind-I). In-depth interviews were conducted with the women working in media (electronic print and digital) of Hyderabad Pakistan to explore the problems of women in media in the framework of feminist theories. The results showed the analysis of twenty (20) In-depth interviews of working women in media.

### **4.1. Social Perception**

Socio-cultural problems with working women are the common in our society, but women who work in the media industry have a level ahead. During the interview, the participants revealed that they faced the severe criticism and hindrances not only from their families, but also from a society at the start of their career in media. The psyche of men about women is decisive that they want to see women working at home only. If some women break hindrances and go outside for work in order to maintain their lifestyle and support family, then they, along with their families get taunted or castigated by the society. The results resemble the survey of Zia and Yasin, (2016) they highlight males' stereotypical thinking, and hostile comments become a mental trauma for working women in the media industry. However, the image of media is unsatisfactory in the eyes of society. People believe that media is an unsuitable profession for females. Consequently, this is a striking issue that every girl faces when she steps into the profession. According to one interviewee:

...Women experience the innumerable problems. On a priority basis, if women have no support from their families, they are criticized unfavorably by their surroundings. By the chance, if women save themselves from an unfavorable surrounding criticism, they get harassed at a greater level by departments or channels where they

work. The departments or channels' official personnel threaten us in a way that if we (women) do not cooperate with them, they will not give us commercials (Ind. Int: 1).

...When I got a job, my in-laws had the wrong perception of me they said she would abandon her husband, make illegal relationships with other men, and could not manage her home (Ind-Int:6).

...When I joined the field of media, my all relatives went against me, and my father faced all their opposition. Our system narrowly supports or gives attention to a girl's education. The common belief rooted in our society is that a girl is born only to look after household matters. Regrettably, no one thinks about girls' education (Ind-Int:10).

#### **4.2. Media's Depiction of Women**

The survey reveals that the public holds the negative views about women who are working in print and radio media, but these views have deteriorated for those women who work in electronic media. People consider them an immoral. They opine that women of electronic media have bad families. Even, they go harsh by saying women working in media are of a bad character. This all happens due to the depiction of women in the media. Media presents their physical look in front of the public in order to sell the products. Women dress up following modern or western culture and look glamorous when they appear in cameras. This is also found by (Smith-Hefner, 1993; Murtiningsih & Ikom, 2017). Hence, the society perceives them as morally weak or corrupt. Such the study participants mentioned in the following words:

...According to people's point of view, females should not enter the profession of media. What public will perceive about them when they come in front of a screen. This happens in the most places, for example, in rural Sindh, women are considered guilty because of their job in the media industry (Ind. Int: 3).

...Women, who work in the media industry, are regarded as wrong (Ind. Int: 2-1-3).

...People thought women would be harassed or misbehaved in the media industry (once they joined the field) (Ind. Int: 4-1).

...Many news channels have a condition to wear modern designed clothes. If a girl does not agree with the above terms, they will be fired from a channel (Ind. Int: 6).

...All opposed my decision of joining media by saying the media profession is just unfavorable (Ind. Int: 10-11).

...Media is believed to be bad field. Mostly, this profession is deemed to be the worst for women workers (Ind. Int: 13).

...Our society disregards the media industry. It means our society has a bad image of those females who are working in dramas, movies, and tv programs (Ind. Int: 16).

### **4.3. Patriarchal Control**

The study results are a similar to those (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002). According to interviewees, our society is discouraging girls' education. The constitution of Pakistan allows education to every citizen without male or female differences, yet larger numbers of female children stay deprived of this right. The psyche of man regards women as either marriage material or ones who are born to serve family and perform household duties only. In our society, teenage girls face another common issue is an early marriage. Besides this problem, they experience the issues of conversions and forced marriages. Such the society also carries on the problem of racial prejudice. Females, who belong to the racist families, confront a lot of problems related to marriage, education, and job. The research participants uncover that they experience the pressure from both family and society in their entire life span. In this regard, their words are quoted below:

...Our family rules do not allow a girl to marry out of the family; we cannot work in the media industry; we can study just under family customs or rules; we are not permitted to go outside of the family premises. My sisters' early marriages opened people's mouths to speak about me, they say I will be over-aged. It means I often hear such talks (Ind. Int: 4).

...As I explained an earlier that everyone raises a finger at a girl who is a diligent and does more work. By contrast, people avoid facing a woman who works very little, talks arrogantly, creates tussles, and speaks with a high tone. Neither do I talk to anyone without an official purpose, nor do I get close to anyone. Due to this habit of mine, they spoil my news so that I start to tussle with them (or talk with them at least) (Ind. Int: 4).

The other interviewee shared:

...I experienced a lot of hurdles at the home of my husband due to my early age in marriage. I was the part of a joint family system, so some family members liked me; some disliked me; while some of them were so rude that they were even not happy with my job and going out from home. Besides, they caused many obstacles for me, but I neither paid attention to them nor their conspiracies (Ind. Int: 17).

### **4.4. Role of Family**

The study result shows men and women are treated unequally. The research is linked with (Hardin & Shain, 2005). Gender discrimination is decisive not only in a society, but also in the family. The treatment of girls either at a home

or in the society is a quite different from boys. Joint family systems also create the hurdles in the life of a girl, when she, with the support of their family, wants to get an education or go to work. Family pressure is always a part of most women and they are overburdened. They have no leniency at a home if they work outside, but even they have to do both professional as well as household work. If any girl stops doing household work, they are titled as bad-mannered or impolite and even faces rude behavior from other family members at a home. This case is discussed the below in the words of the participants:

...I encountered the numerous issues in the past, then; I understood that “women are not treated fairly” (Ind. Int: 1).

...Professionalism is a common in every working place. Some males may not want women to develop, it may be they are scared that once women get developed, they (women) will try to dominate them (men). I have been developed my confidence level with the help and support of my parents. There are some black sheep who desire to be dominant over females, subsequently, they attack the character of women by spreading the different rumors about us. Moreover, they harass and even try their all efforts to overcome women (Ind. Int: 5).

...I lived in a joint family. It was very ticklish/difficult for me to leave a 05-month-old baby at home and come to work. When I went back home, I had to perform household duties. Indeed, it was very exhausting for me, and were hardly relaxed myself.

...Due to the several factors, women are viewed as wrong, for instance, odd day and night working shifts, no leaves on Eid or other occasions. Hence, these generate the problems of time management and family pressure on us. If a single girl or a married woman is not present in a family function/event or she does not participate in the house works, then naturally family pressure develops (on her) (Ind. Int: 9).

...My father-in-law used to ask me to come at a home earlier and take care of the children. The biggest problem for working women is their children who are deprived of time and attention. I have experienced a lot of issues as a result of my late coming at a home (Ind. Int: 15).

...I met with the numerous family problems. Relatives caused the various issues by arguing “how a girl joins a media industry!” It will sound strange to see her on-screen and what people will think about her; she will interact with males (Ind. Int: 16).

#### **4.5. Marital Issues**

The research participants revealed that they have also problems related to marriage proposals. On the one hand, they get a very few proposals from the

people due to their job in the field of media; on the second hand, they are abided by their families to not marry their chosen person. Some families do not marry their daughters out of the family. Further, it was collected from participants that married women have more problems because they manage household work, take care of children, and do professional duties simultaneously. Patel, Govender, Paruk, & Ramgoon, (2006) also stated married women experience more work-family conflicts than vice versa. By chance, if any woman fails to handle all mentioned tasks together, then they are regarded as incompetent. Divorced women workers are also facing problems from the family and society. The family considers them as a burden, while a society regards them as an immoral. Even, divorced women fear of co-working environment. Some of the participants shared the information in the following lines:

...We have the diverse cultural, Islamic, and family occasions, for example, Eid and birthday celebrations, marriage and death ceremonies, where a family wants us. But job especially, media job does not work straight, it needs us 24 hours, there is no morning, evening, or night, just we have to work (Ind. Int: 9).

...My Mother-in-law and sister-in-law go against me if I get the support of my husband. They point a finger at me by saying she is working outside instead of looking after children and home. Besides, they assert they brought me to look after home (Ind. Int: 16).

## **5. Conclusion**

Working women in the media industry are facing professional and socio-cultural problems in the media industry of Hyderabad. It was found that stereotype thinking of men has a disempowering impact on the accomplishments of women. Due to it, they have been neglected in all walks of life. The media's failure in the depiction of women's positive image in a society is a ground for harsh criticism from the society for them. Respect and capability of women were under high threat in the media industry. Male family members' dominancy over females restricted the opportunities, on the one hand, resulting in an unequal distribution of social resources for them, on the other hand. Besides, these problems, married working women were judged as an inadequate and incompetent, because they could not give much time due to their handling of home and office work responsibilities together. It was also observed that if a working female was divorced, then she was subject to devaluation. To wrap up the findings, the patriarchal system has a crucial influence on the life of working women. It sets a strict rule to control the outdoor work of women in the name of family honor. Instead of standing against the patriarchal system, they mostly give up their jobs or tolerate patriarchal dominancy and injustice.

## **6. Recommendation**

In the light of research results, the scholar of the present study proposes the following suggestions for the uplift and welfare of media women of Pakistan.

- Our Society is mostly patriarchal where a man considers himself superior to a woman. They think women are born to work in the house only. This attitude should be changed. Women should allow joining the field of media.
- The media's image in public is not satisfactory. Largely, the media does not offer higher positions to women workers. Besides, the media mostly presents a physical look of women, and they are failed to provide a secure working environment for women workers. Due to this, a society sees the media profession as an unsuitable for women. Hence, the Media industries should offer a concrete help to their women workers. The media should give them an equal position to men.
- Mostly media women face problems from their families. The family is the first place where women are treated lower than men. Working women are mostly disliked by relatives and even close family members. So, the families should support and encourage them.
- Girls working in media get fewer marriage proposals. This stereotype thinking should be eradicated. Everyone should be the positive with regard to media working women.
- Though laws are present, yet unimplemented. Law enforcement agencies should strictly implement available laws that protect women inside and outside the working environment.

## References

- Rehmat, A. (2017). "Key challenges of women Journalists in Pakistan – A book of testimonies". Pakistan: Freedom Network.
- Akerlof, G. A., & Kranton, R. E. (2000). Economics and identity. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 115(3), 715-753.
- Brinkmann, S. & Kvale, S. (2015). *Interviews: learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2013). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Hardin, M., & Shain, S. (2005). Strength in numbers? The experiences and attitudes of women in sports media careers. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(4), 804-819.
- Ishfaq, K. Altaf, A. Ali, J. and Fayyaz, B. (2018 July 16). Challenges Faced by Female Journalists: A Study of District Multan, Pakistan, *XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology* Retrieved from <https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2018/webprogram/Paper101067.html>

- Kane, E. W. (2012). *The gender trap: Parents and the pitfalls of raising boys and girls*. New York: NYU Press.
- Murtiningsih, B. S. E., Advenita, G. M., & Ikom, S. (2017). Representation of Patriarchal Culture in New Media: A case study of News and Advertisement on Tribunnews. com. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 143.
- Nart, S., & Batur, O. (2014). The relation between work-family conflict, job stress, organizational commitment and job performance: A study on Turkish primary teachers. *European journal of research on Education*, 2(2), 72-81.
- Patel, C. J., Govender, V., Paruk, Z., & Ramgoon, S. (2006). Working mothers: Family-work conflict, job performance, and family/work variables. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 32(2), 39-45.
- Patton, M. Q. 2015. *Qualitative research & evaluation methods : integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Nusrat, R. (2018 July 13). The Challenges of Pakistan's Female Journalists, *the Diplomat Pakistan* Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/the-challenges-of-pakistans-female-journalists/>
- Robson, C. & McCartan, K. (2016). *Real-world research : a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings* (4th ed.). London: Wiley.
- Sekaquaptewa, D., & Thompson, M. (2002). The differential effects of solo status on members of high-and low-status groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(5), 694-707.
- Sultana, A. (2010). Patriarchy and women s subordination: a theoretical analysis. *The Arts Faculty Journal*, 4, 1-18.
- Zia, A., Batool, S., & Yasin, Z. (2016). Women harassment at workplace: A study of Pakistani television channels. *Global Media Journal: Pakistan Edition*, 9(1), 5.