

Work-Life Balance of Women Media Professionals in Kerala

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Abstract

Globalized era is witnessing an inspiring and impressive presence of women in almost all domains of business and industry. Media industry is no exception to it. Data shows that during the last five years, women have struck out this most vibrant sector bravely, beating a path that definitely marks their empowerment and engagement in information and communication field. Now that be it in print or the television media, women acquire hitherto unattainable positions, becoming indispensable in the media field. With the massive explosion of newspapers, satellite television channels and FM radio stations the opportunities for women in media have been growing in India. But, this glaring trend is not felt in Kerala, a state which boasts of high literacy and empowerment indices. The wide gap in the male-female ratio in journalism profession, particularly in print media in Kerala, indicates that male dominance is still prevailing in Malayalam newspapers. Malayalee women who dared to enter the field still occupy lower positions and find it hard to survive in the field beyond a maximum of 10 years. What is the reason for this deplorable poor presence of women in journalism sector in the state? Do work-life conflicts prevent them from pursuing a career in journalism? Data collected from women journalists all over Kerala explore the factors that contribute to the appalling gender imbalances in Malayalam print media. The paper also investigates the predictors of women journalists' satisfaction with and perception towards their work environment.

Keywords

media & gender, work-life conflicts, Malayalam journalism, women journalists

Introduction

Gender discrimination in work place has become a global problem these days. In Kerala it is very apparent that there is a wide gap in the male -female ratio in journalism profession, particularly in print media. As per the data available in the PRD directory (2013) published by Government of Kerala, out of total journalists in various print and electronic media, less than 10 percent are women. By the last decades, there has been an increase in the number of women in the profession, but they still occupy low positions and find it hard to survive in the field beyond a maximum of 10 years, and women above 40 are rarely seen in this vocation. Among them very few could reach to the executive or editorial positions and it shows that, it still is a male dominant profession.

With the massive explosion of newspapers, satellite television channels and FM radio stations in the media industry, the opportunities for women in media have been growing in India. As Ranu Tomar (2011) observes, as far as women journalists are concerned, it has been a hard struggle for them to break the glass-ceiling. The increasing number of women in media does not denote the better status of women. Women hesitate to come forward as they find it difficult to make a balance between work and family. Similarly, Brian and Elmore (2011) notice that, women need to negotiate work-family conflicts that can be a potent motivator for transitioning out of newsroom staff positions and into a typical work. As many women journalists report overall satisfaction with their jobs, many want to leave the news business as the odd working hours is vulnerable to their family.

Work-life balance

Nancy R Lockwood (2003) observes that in a society filled with conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work/life balance has become a predominant issue in the workplace. Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal. Greenhaus et al (2003) define work-family balance as the "extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role". According to Greenhaus & Beutell (1985), work life conflict can be defined as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect versa. Qingjing Xu (2012) defines balance as an ongoing achievement for working women and means a state of equilibrium between work and life.

Women as journalists: the Kerala context

The general assumption is that, it is difficult for women to reach to the top, or to decision making level. It is not because women are unproductive when compared to men, or are intellectually unfit. This may be because of the traditional upbringing in the society. According to Joshy et al, (2006), women are burdened with certain disadvantages as a result of the responsibilities and this situation gets further accentuated when confronted by male prejudice in traditionally male

dominated professions, like journalism. In Kerala, women were expected to have only family responsibilities. The reasons behind why women do not choose journalism as a career are applicable to other professions too. But the scenario is changing as women occupy all sectors, and they declare that they are not behind men.

Work - family conflict is prevalent for women in any field. In Kerala, the usual trend is that women quit the profession once family responsibilities are taken over after marriage. Rigorous nature of the profession including night shifting, discourage women. Before the 1980s women journalists were not allowed to work beyond 5 pm and women themselves refused to work late hours in the office. Later, attitudes of women as well as families changed radically and women began to demand night shifts. This changed situation warrants more explorations on how women media professionals balance their life in family which is still rooted in patriarchal convictions with all its normative and conventional obligations and the work at media industry which expects rigorous professional practices.

Objectives and methodology

The present study was taken up to examine the work-life balance of women media professionals in Kerala. The study also looks in to the working conditions and socio demographic profile of women journalists. Structured questionnaires were administered to women journalists working in television, radio and newspapers, using purposive random sampling techniques. Out of 102 questionnaires distributed, 52 were rejected and 50 accepted with response rate of 49%.

The structured questionnaire was divided in to four parts. Part I consists of question related to identification data or personal information such as age, level of education, marital status, family type etc. Part II includes questions related to designation and job status, part III and IV focus on the work environment and work life balance. Simple percentage method and cross tabulation are used to analyze data.

Sample profile

Women journalists working in television, radio and newspapers constitute the sample, of which 32 per cent belong to four television channels –Dharshana TV, Mathrubhumi News, Dooradharshan and Media One TV and 4 per cent to radio while the majority 60 percent to the print media. When 56 per cent of the total sample represents 11 newspapers in English and Malayalam – The Hindu, The Indian Express, The Financial Express, Chandrika Daily, Siraj Daily, Thejas Daily, Janayugam, Madhyamam Daily, Mathrubhumi, Malayala Manorama, Kerala Kaumudhi, four per cent belong to magazines. Two women journalists in the sample (4 per cent) are working for the news agency Press Trust of India.

Findings

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Parameter	F (%)
Age	20-25	8 (16)
	25-40	28 (56)
	40-60	14 (28)
	Total	50 (100)
Medium	TV	16 (32)
	Radio	2 (4)
	Newspaper	28 (56)
	Magazine	2 (4)
	News Agency	2 (4)
	Total	50 (100)
Job status	Permanent	34 (68)
	Contract	16 (32)
	Total	50 (100)

Women after the age 40 are only a few in journalism profession. More than half of the respondents, that is 56 per cent, belong to the age group of 25-40, and majority of them (64.3percent) work in newspaper industry, 21.4 percent are in television, 7.1 percent in magazine and 7.1 percent in online medium. 28 per cent are in the age group 40-60.

Table 2: Age and working medium of respondents

Age	Medium	F	%	
			Age	Medium
20-25	TV	6	75	37.5
	Radio	0	0	0
	Newspaper	2	25	7.1
	Magazine	0	0	0
	News Agency	0	0	0
26-40	TV	6	21.4	37.5
	Radio	0	0	0
	Newspaper	18	64.3	64.3
	Magazine	2	7.1	100
	News Agency	2	7.1	100
41-60	TV	4	28.6	25
	Radio	2	14.3	100
	Newspaper	8	57.1	28.6
	Magazine	0	0	0
	News Agency	0	0	0

Women are rarely seen in decision making positions or handling hard news, most of the women journalists are reporters or feature writers. Respondents held varied designations in the media such as, reporting, editing and anchoring. Though the nature of the job sounds as if the same, their designations varied depending upon the organization they are in. 34 per cent are Reporters, 34 per cent are Sub-Editors, 8 per cent are News-Editor and Presenter, and others are Anchors (Freelance), Assistant Editor, Circulation Manager, Correspondent, Deputy Editor, Junior Broadcast Journalist, Programme Executive, Senior reporter, Senior Sub editor, Staff Reporter, Sub editor trainee and Sub editor and News reader. Many of them are specializing in soft news.

Table 3: Designation of respondents

Designation	F (%)
Anchor, Freelance	2 (4)
Assistant Editor	1 (2)
Circulation Manager	1 (2)
Correspondent	2 (4)
Deputy Editor	1(2)
Junior Broadcast Journalist	3 (6)
News Editor, Presenter	4 (8)
Programme Executive	2 (4)
Reporter	17 (34)
Sub Editor	17 (34)
Total	50 (100)

52 per cent are specializing in various topics such as art, culture and life style, Cinema, Crime, Finance, Features, Health, Higher Education, Human Issues, Politics, International Politics, Environment and Liberation, Science, Technical Stories and Human Rights.

Table 4: Marital status, no. of children and family type

Variables	Parameter	F (%)	
Marital status	Unmarried	16 (32)	
	Married	34 (68)	
No of children		Out of Total	Out of married
	0	24 (48)	8 (23.5)
	1	16 (32)	16 (47.1)
	2	10 (20)	10 (29.4)
Family type	Joint	12 (24)	
	Nuclear	38 (76)	

Majority (68 percent) of the respondents is married, and 32 percent are unmarried. Out of the total 50 women journalists, 16 (32 percent) have one child and 10 (20 percent) have two children. 47.1 per cent of the married women media professionals have only one child and a 29.4 percent reported that they have two

children. 23.5 percent don't have children and none of them have more than two children. 24 percent are living in joint family, while 38 percent have nuclear family.

Table 5: Work experience of women journalists

Variables	Work experience in years	F (%)
Work experience	0-5	14 (28)
	6-10	20 (40)
	11 and above	16 (32)
	Total	50 (100)
Work experience in the current organization	0-5	24 (48)
	6-10	12 (24)
	11 and above	10 (20)
	Total	46 (92)

28 percent of respondents have less than five years of working experience in media. 40percent of the respondents have been in service between six to ten years, while 32 percent have more than 11 years of working experience, in which three of them have 30 years of experience in the field.

Interestingly, the work experience in the present organization is much different when compared to the extent of total work experience. Many have a break in their service after getting married and in their maternity time. 48percent of the respondents have five or less than five years of experience in the currently working organization. While 24percent have six to ten years of service, only 20percent have more than 11 years of experience in the present media organization.

Work environment

Media in Kerala and the status of women journalist has changed radically. Women are comfortable to work in media; they are satisfied with their work and work environment, and in the relationship with their employers and colleagues. A major number of the respondents are confident that they are able to meet out the demands of profession, and they report that, there is no gender discrimination in their organization.

Table 6: Respondents' work environment and satisfaction with job

Satisfaction Level	Work environment	Relationship with employers and colleagues	Satisfaction with job
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Highly satisfied	8 (16)	10 (20)	6 (12)
Satisfied	36 (72)	36 (72)	38 (76)
Less satisfied	4 (8)	2 (4)	4 (8)
Not at all satisfied	2 (4)	2 (4)	2 (4)
Total	50 (100)	50 (100)	50 (100)

Almost three fourth, that is 72percent felt they are 'satisfied' in their work environment. 16 percent reported that their work environment is 'highly satisfied', and a significant number of them are working in newspaper (75 percent). Only four percent reported as they are 'not at all satisfied' with their work environment. Twenty percent of the respondents reported that they are 'highly satisfied' in the relationship with their employers and colleagues, while four percent feels as 'not at all satisfied', four percent feels 'less satisfied'. Where, 72 percent reports as just 'satisfied' in their relationship with employers and colleagues. 12 percentages are 'highly satisfied' in the job, in which majority are in television. 76 percent reported that they are 'satisfied'. Only two of the respondents report that they are 'not at all satisfied'.

Table 9: Ability to meet the demands of job

Agreement level	F (%)
strongly agree	18 (36)
Agree	24 (48)
Neutral	2 (4)
Disagree	6 (12)
Total	50 (100)

A significant percentage (36) of respondents 'strongly agrees' that they are able to meet out the demands of job, while 12 percentages 'disagree' to this. Almost half of the respondents 'agree' that they can meet out the demands of the job.

Table 8: Gender Discrimination in Workplace

Designation	Gender Discrimination		Total F (%)
	Yes	No	
	F (%)	F (%)	
Anchor, Freelance	0 (0)	2 (4)	2 (4)
Assistant Editor	0 (0)	1 (2)	1 (2)
Circulation Manager	0 (0)	1 (2)	1 (2)
Deputy Editor	0 (0)	1 (2)	1 (2)
Junior Broadcast Journalist	0 (0)	3 (6)	3 (6)
News Editor, Presenter	0 (0)	4 (8)	4 (8)
Programme Executive	2 (4)	0 (0)	2 (4)
Reporter	2 (4)	15 (30)	17 (34)
Sub Editor	0 (0)	17 (34)	17 (34)
Correspondent	2 (4)	0 (0)	2 (4)
Total	8 (16)	42 (84)	50 (100)

Gender discrimination is prevalent in workplaces in any field. But in Kerala, women journalists don't face severe gender discrimination in media and all the women journalists in managerial and higher designations claim that there is no gender discrimination in media.

Only 16 percent of the respondents claim that there is gender discrimination in their organization, where the majority, 84 percent reports as there is no gender discrimination in their organization. While 17 percent of the women journalists agree that there is gender discrimination in their organization, all the women journalists in the sub editor post and other higher positions say that there is no gender discrimination in their media.

Work and family

For harmonizing the work and life for women in any job, especially, to continue as a media professional, family support is a vital factor. Majority of women journalists in Kerala miss out quality time with their family because of pressure of work, and their work hours or timing hinder their family commitments. Majority of the respondents claim that they are getting good family support for this profession.

Table 10: Family support and spending quality time with family

Agreement level	Getting good Family Support	Missing quality time with family
	F (%)	F (%)
Strongly agree	20 (40)	0 (0)
Agree	24 (48)	26 (52)
Neutral	4 (8)	6 (12)
Disagree	2 (4)	12 (24)
Strongly disagree	0 (0)	4 (8)
Total	50 (100)	48 (96)

Forty percent of the respondents 'strongly agree' that they are getting good support from their family. Only one women media professional claim that she is not getting family support, while 48 percent 'agree' that they are getting good family support to continue as a media professional. 52 percentage 'agree' that they usually miss out quality time with their family because of pressure of work, while 24 percent 'disagree' to it. Eight percent strongly disagreed to it, while four percent didn't respond to the question.

Table 11: Problems with work time, night shift and travel

Parameter	Work Hour/timing hinder family commitments	No problem with working in night shift	Comfortable with travelling away from home.
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Strongly agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	14 (28)
Agree	24(48)	12 (24)	32 (64)
Neutral	4(8)	32 (64)	0 (0)
Disagree	20 (40)	4 (8)	4 (8)
Strongly disagree	2 (4)	2 (4)	0 (0)
Total	50 (100)	50 (100)	50 (100)

While 48 percent of the respondents 'agree' that their work hours or timing hinder their family commitments, almost an equal section of respondents (40 percent) disagree and claims that their work hours or timing didn't hinder their family commitments. And only a four percent 'strongly disagree'. Twenty four percent of the respondents 'strongly agree' that they don't have any problem with working in night shifts. Only a four percent 'disagree' and reports that they have problem with it. Majority of 64 percentages 'agree' that they don't have any problem. Ninety two percent of the respondents' claim that they are comfortable with travelling away from home, as part of their job, in which 28 percent 'strongly

agree' that they are comfortable with travelling, and 64 percent 'agree' to it. Only an eight percent of the respondents 'disagree' and feels uncomfortable in travelling away from home.

Only 16 percent of the respondents claim that their organization currently providing work-life policies or programme, while, 72 percent reports that their organization not providing any work life policy/programme. A 12 percent didn't respond.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of the study shows resemblance to Brian L. Massey & Cindy J. Elmore (2011) that majority of women journalists in Kerala miss out quality time with their family because of pressure of work, and their work hours or timing hinder their family commitments. Women journalists in Kerala above 10 years of experience in the field is only a few in numbers and many have a break in their career as a result of their marriage and maternity period. A large portion of Kerala women journalists held reporter position and handling soft news, and women in senior position are very less. In contrary to Pamela Bhagat (nd), Murthy and Anita (2010) and Fonny Hutagalung & Zahari Ishak (2012), Women journalist don't face gender discrimination to a great extent in media and, all of women journalists in managerial and higher designations claim that there is no gender discrimination in media, thus far why men outnumber women in media or why women is underrepresented? They are comfortable with travelling away from job and working in night shifts is not a problem for Kerala women journalists. In contrary to Rian Van Den Wijngaard (1992), female journalists are financially independent of their job. And they are getting good support from their family to continue in this profession. Contrary to Uma Joshi, Anjali Pahad and Avanimaniar (2006), the findings show that women journalists are confident that they can meet out the demands of the job, majority are in the age group of 25- 40. Only a few are not satisfied in the job. And they are satisfied with their work environment and in the relationships with their employers and colleagues.

The study confirms that women journalists are facing work-life imbalance. They are missing out quality time to spend with their family, because of pressure of work and their job/working hours hinder family commitments. Any work life policies or programme should be implemented by the media institutions and there should be provisions for maternity leave and childcare facilities. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable progress in the status of women journalists in Kerala. There is a slow but sure improvement in the number of women inflowing to the profession. Gender discrimination is not so pertinent today. Now women are getting support from their family, employers and colleagues to choose and continue in this profession, they don't hesitate to travel or to take night shifts. However, women can hardly reach to the decision making positions in media.

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