

Understanding the Impact of Professional Challenges on Health of Women Journalists in NCR, India

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Abstract - This study explores the significant effects of career obstacles on the well-being of female journalists in India's National Capital Region (NCR). The study examines the particular difficulties that women in the journalism industry confront, such as workplace discrimination, gender bias, and the demanding nature of their profession. The study reveals concerning data on the physical and mental health problems that female journalists face. The results show that respondents experienced high levels of stress, anxiety, and physical symptoms, underscoring the critical need for better work environments and support networks. The paper concludes with a set of recommendations aimed at addressing these health challenges, including official period leaves, sick leave policies, mandatory rest periods, and regulation of working hours to safeguard the well-being of women journalists in NCR, India.

Keywords - *women journalists, physical health, mental health, impact, journalistic challenges*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of journalism, women have long stood as resilient voices, challenging norms and shaping narratives in the pursuit of truth. Yet, behind the headlines a narrative often overlooked—the toll that the profession exacts on their physical and mental well-being. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the unique challenges faced by women journalists, ranging from gender bias and workplace discrimination to the demanding nature of the profession itself.

According to a 2005 CDC research, journalists rank seventh out of the top 10 most stressful jobs (Verma 2021). However, while the discussion surrounding gender disparities in journalism has gained traction; there remains a notable gap in our understanding of the health ramifications of these challenges, particularly for women in the field. As women continue to navigate a landscape fraught with obstacles, ranging from hostile work environments to the pressures of breaking news cycles, it becomes imperative to delve deeper into the impact of these challenges on their health. By examining the physical and mental health implications of the challenges encountered in the field, this study aims to shed light on the often-hidden struggles of women working in media.

Section 2, review of literature, provides a comprehensive examination of existing research related to the health challenges faced by journalists. The review reveals that journalists experience significant health issues due to their profession, including ethical dilemmas that contribute to emotional distress and impaired work-life balance. This section also discusses the research gap and objectives of the study.

In Section 3, the research methodology employed in the study is detailed. A quantitative research design was adopted, utilizing a survey method to collect and analyze data pertinent to the research questions.

Section 4 presents the findings of the study, followed by a detailed analysis. It also includes the study's conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future research directions. The manuscript concludes with a comprehensive list of references cited throughout the paper.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The health of journalists is significantly impacted by a range of challenges in their profession. These include ethical dilemmas, gender discrimination, and privacy concerns (Boga, 2023). The journalism career can have a significant impact on the health of journalists, with factors such as emotional distress, unfavourable working conditions, and a poor work-life balance contributing to vocational well-being issues. (Chen, 2019).

The professional challenges faced by women journalists, such as long working hours, lack of specialized training in health reporting, safety concerns during coverage, and gender-based discrimination, have a significant impact on their health and well-being. Studies highlight that female journalists in the media industry struggle to balance work and personal life, leading to adverse effects on their quality of life. (Gargi, 2022)

Additionally difficulties with safety, such as physical and cyber-attacks, have an adverse effect on the physical and mental health of women journalists covering sensitive subjects like protests, which in turn affects their capacity to report professionally. (Olayinka, 2020)

Inherent risk factors in the profession, including stress, travel, and psychological strain, can also pose health and safety hazards. Inherent risk factors that are more prevalent in this field include those associated with travel, repetitive strain injuries, and psychological stress. (Collins, 2001).

Another study that examined the mental health impacts on TV news field crews in Columbia highlighted varied experiences, including burnout and second-hand trauma. (DAHLHEIMER, 2022)

The majority of journalists led unhealthy lifestyles, which included skipping breakfast, eating dinner extremely late, snacking at midnight, getting little sleep, spending more time online, and not exercising. This unhealthy lifestyle impacts the health of journalists negatively (Yin, 2008). Recent studies highlight the significant impact of online harassment and trauma exposure on journalists' well-being and professional performance. Journalists face various forms of online harassment, including insults, threats, and privacy intrusion, which can lead to self-censorship and reduced public engagement (Lee & Park, 2024)

Research Gap: Although there is substantial research on the negative impact of journalism on health, less is known about the unique experiences of female journalists in India's National Capital Region. Previous research mentions problems such as extended work hours and discrimination based on gender, but it does not go into detail about how these things affect people's physical and mental health in this area. Although other studies have linked journalists to general health hazards, they have not examined the specific ways in which these factors impact women journalists in the National Capital Region. Since the region has unique professional and socio-cultural characteristics, closing these gaps is essential.

Objectives:

1. To identify the specific mental health implications experienced by women journalists result of various challenges encountered within the journalism profession.
2. To identify the physical health consequences experienced by women journalist as a result of various challenges experienced by women journalist.
3. To understand the impact of these health challenges on women journalist.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to understand the impact of journalistic challenges on the physical and mental health of women journalists in the Delhi-NCR region. The survey method was employed to gather data from a representative sample of women journalists.

Research Design: A quantitative research design was utilized to collect data at a single point in time.

Sampling Technique: The target population for this study comprised all women journalists working in the Delhi-NCR region. A convenience sampling technique was used. Total 216 responses have been received from the women journalists within the specified geographic area.

Data Collection: A survey using close-ended structured questionnaire was administered using online survey platforms. The questionnaire aimed to collect data on the physical and mental health of women journalists, as well as the specific challenges they encounter in their profession.

4. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Table -1

Details of Respondent who accepted that their health deteriorated after joining journalism

Details	Frequency (N=216)	Analysis
Yes	88	Table 1 indicates that 40.7% of respondents feel their health deteriorated after choosing journalism as a career, while 31.5% were uncertain ("Maybe"), suggesting ambiguity in perceived health impacts. In contrast, 27.8% reported no deterioration in health.
No	60	
Maybe	68	

Table -2

Respondents who experience physical symptoms such as headaches, muscle tension, or fatigue related to their work as a journalist

Details	Frequency (N=216)	Analysis
Always	32	A significant percentage of respondents, 14.8%, always experience physical symptoms such as headaches, muscle tension, or fatigue related to their work as journalists. Additionally, 37% often encounter these issues, and 40.7% sometimes experience them. A smaller portion, 6%, rarely faces these symptoms, while only 2% never experience such issues. This distribution indicates that physical symptoms are a common problem among journalists.
Often	80	
Sometimes	88	
Rarely	12	
Never	04	

Table -3

Respondent frequently experience stress or anxiety related to your work

Details	Frequency (N=216)	Analysis
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Yes	76	The data shows that work-related stress or anxiety is prevalent among respondents, with 35% frequently experiencing these issues and 44% encountering them sometimes. Only 20% reported not experiencing stress or anxiety, indicating a smaller unaffected minority.
No	44	
Sometimes	96	

Table -4

Status of respondents who is facing difficulties with sleep (e.g. insomnia, difficulty falling or staying asleep) due to work-related stress

Details	Frequency (N=216)	Analysis
Never	44	Table 6 shows that 80% of respondents experience work-related sleep difficulties to varying degrees, with 27% regularly suffering from them. Specifically, 20% never face these issues, while 20% often and 7% always do, and 41% sometimes encounter them.
Occasionally	24	
Sometimes	88	
Often	44	
Always	16	

Table -5

Details of acceptance of respondents on any health issue due to odd timings or long working hours

Details	Frequency (N=216)	Analysis
Yes	164	The data shows that 76% of respondents attribute health issues to irregular timings or long working hours, while 24% are unaffected.
No	52	

Table -6

Respondents considered leaving her career due to concerns about its impact on physical or mental health

Details	Frequency (N=216)	Analysis
Yes	128	The data suggests that a majority of respondents (59%) have considered quitting their job due to health issues, while 40.7% have never thought about it.
No	88	

Table -7

Respondents who believe that the challenges you face as a journalist have a significant impact on both your physical and mental health

Details	Frequency(N=216)	Analysis
Yes	140	Nearly 65% of respondents believe that the challenges of journalism significantly impact their physical and mental health, while 19% think they might be affected. Only 16.7% feel these challenges have no impact.
No	36	
Maybe	40	

Health issues faced by respondents due to job pressure

Respondents reported high levels of stress, anxiety, and insomnia, which are often accompanied by headaches, neck pain, and eye strain due to prolonged screen time. Many respondents also reported weight gain, gastrointestinal problems, and a lack of physical activity, contributing to body stiffness, back pain, and posture-related issues. The irregular work schedules and intense job demands lead to sleep deprivation, mental fatigue, and a lack of personal time. Additional health issues noted include hormonal imbalances, urine infection, migraines, skin problems, and conditions like spondylitis and PCOD. A significant number of respondents also experienced a pervasive lack of mental peace and reported feeling consistently tired and weak.

Conclusion:

The research findings provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of journalistic challenges on health of women journalists in NCR, India. According to the findings, a sizable segment of journalists—especially those with fewer than five years of experience—report that their physical health has declined since beginning their careers. Particularly, 40.7% of respondents acknowledged a decline in their health, with common issues including stress, anxiety, headache, PCOD, Urine infection (particularly for reporters) and eyesight problems and sleep disturbances.

The fact that a sizable portion of respondents (140 out of 216) think that the difficulties they face in the journalism business have a major negative influence on their physical and mental health highlights how widespread these health issues are in the field. These findings indicate that the pressures and demands of the journalism profession have substantial adverse effects on the health and well-being of journalists.

The study also reveals a pervasive sense of stress and mental health issues among journalists. Nearly half of the respondents reported feeling overstressed due to the nature of their job, and a significant portion frequently experiences work-related stress or anxiety. The effects of long shifts and irregular work schedules were also apparent, as 76% of respondents linked their work schedules to health issues. The prevalence of feelings of depression or hopelessness related to their job further underscores the mental health challenges faced by journalists. The majority of respondents believe that the challenges of their profession significantly affect both their physical and mental health, with 59% having considered leaving their career due to these concerns. These findings call for urgent measures to address the health and well-being of journalists, including improved work conditions and support systems.

Recommendations:

The study suggests many health measures for NCR women journalists. Encourage sick leave without repercussions, guarantee at least one day off per week, limit work hours to 48 per week with extra pay, and give flexible working arrangements. It also promotes ergonomic office design, mental health assistance, and a health-conscious workplace culture with education and incentives. These measures aim to improve women journalists' well-being, productivity, and job happiness.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study has potential be used in many academic and practical projects. This study identifies knowledge gaps and unanswered questions to create the groundwork for future research. Longitudinal study on health effects, comparative studies across geographies and media platforms, and evaluations of women journalists' support systems could be done to improve our understanding. The study should include a bigger sample size of people from varied demographic and geographical backgrounds to improve dependability. Examining technology, social media, complex health variables, and enterprise regulatory frameworks can provide more insights. The study's findings can help policymakers inform decisions, improve company practices, and innovate assistance measures. Further research on women journalists' needs and experiences can improve

solutions and initiatives. This will help them confront new difficulties and keep their research relevant in a changing media context.

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