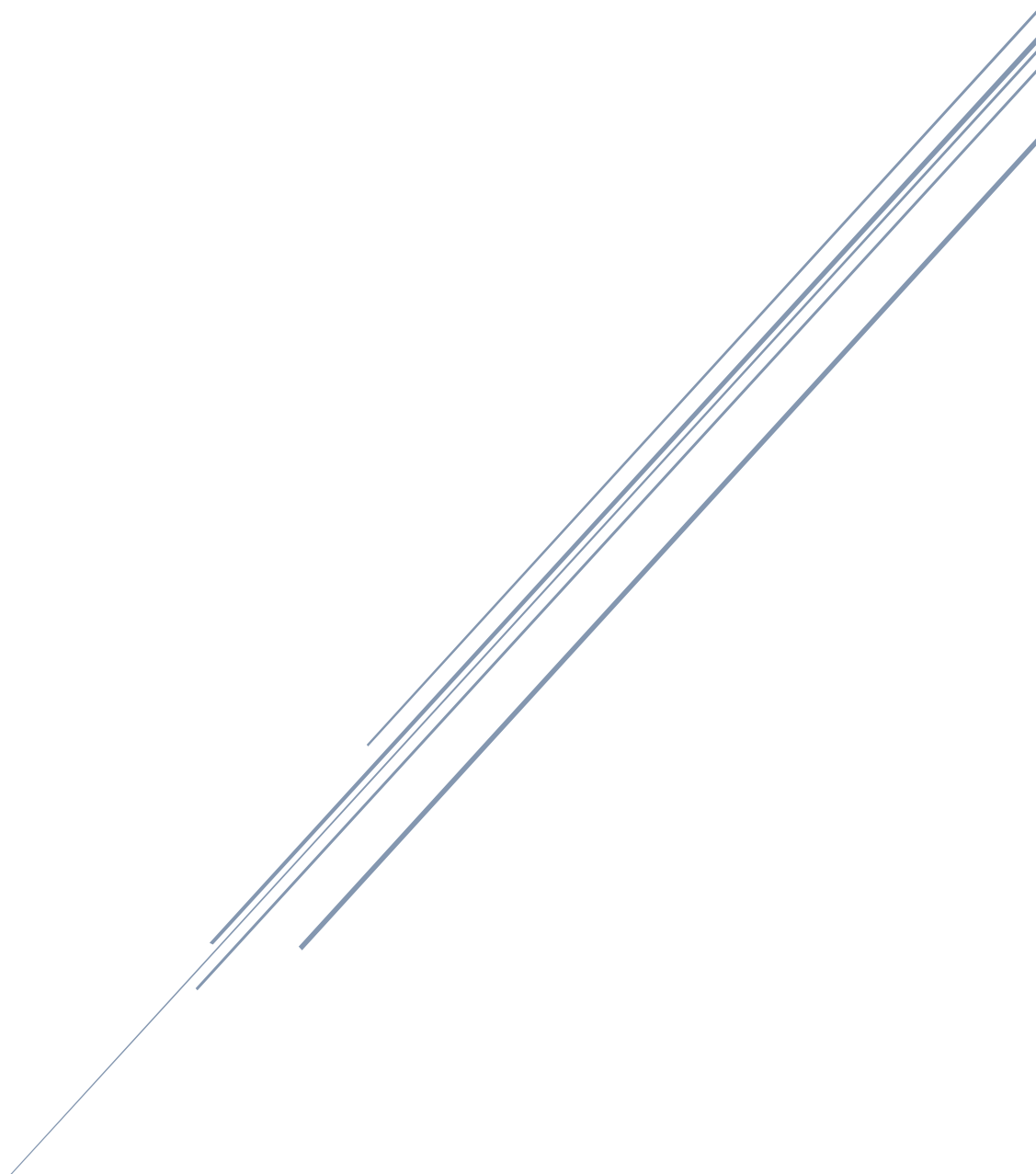


WOMEN IN NEWSROOM IN NEPAL



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2019

Executive Summary

Nepal's news mediascape has continued to grow over the years. The expansion of media since 1990s has culminated to over 500 radio stations, 100 registered television stations, 1700 online news media platforms and over 800 regular print media in Nepal. Still at large, the voice in the news media are dominated by male be it in representation of news content and recruitment of human resources.

Efforts to make news media gender friendly has continued over the years with provisions of representation of women through policy initiatives at the government and private institutions and also in the portrayal of women in the news media. Based on the findings, the study showed that number of female journalists have grown exponentially over the past ten years, with 448 per cent of female journalists' participation since 2006.

This study brings into understanding the situation of female journalists in Nepal and explore the needs of female journalists that could support to empower them. The study points out various aspects of working women journalists through qualitative and quantitative data. The participants of the survey were limited to working women journalists in Kathmandu valley.

Out of 87 journalists that participated in the survey two- third of journalists are young, the work force comprises between age group 20 to 40 years. Majority of journalists work in the private news media, where near about majority of them enrolled in the media through open competition. Similarly, over half of the journalists have experience of over 10 years but still at large, one-third of the journalists work as reporters and 18 per cent as sub-editors.

With respect to the education background, more than two-third of the journalists are graduates with 68 per cent of women journalists have master's degree and 26 per cent have bachelor's degree. Female journalists come from the background of Humanities and Social sciences where majority of journalists have academic degree in journalism.

The survey showed that that women journalists have diversified their field of news reporting. They report on different sectors such as human rights issues, education, health, art and culture, international relations, laws/ courts, politics apart from gender issues.

Despite some changes over the years, the study points out challenges with respect to sustainability, working environment among women journalists. The study has also pointed out that the number of women journalists joining the field has increased but retaining human resource is a challenge which has adversely affected participation of female journalists' participation in the leadership position. But growing number of mid-career journalists and women journalists over ten years experiences in the field in Kathmandu indicates that there is possibility of their engagement in the higher positions in future.

The study raises question with respect to capacity building approach in Nepal. Despite journalists have received certain level of trainings but they still demand similar type of training. Short-term capacity building programs are one of the major reasons behind dissatisfaction towards capacity building approach in Nepal.

Based on the findings of the study the study recommends the need of representation in the news media and focus on continuity of female journalists in the field through affirmative action, the capacity building approach of the journalists needs to be changed, short term training programs be replaced by long term training programs and development of gender policies is necessary in the media institutions.

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List of abbreviation

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FNJ	Federation of Nepali Journalists
KII	Key Informant Interview
RSS	National News Agency

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The role of news media to promote gender equality is unabated. It can play a significant role by providing an opportunity for employment and promoting female staff and also in the fair representation of women portrayal in the news media. The relationship between gender and the media has thus been recognized as a major area for overall development of women.

Since the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) was defined at the Fourth World Conference on Women convened by the United Nations in 1995, two strategic objectives were included: 1) increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and 2) promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.¹

But the voice to make newsroom gender friendly by increasing the number of women journalists, continue to develop their career in the field of journalism and opportunities to lead the newsroom are considered major challenges towards gender friendly news media environment.

The challenge for equal representation of women in the newsroom have been identified in the research across the world. The Global Report on Status of Women in the News Media has identified that “women represent only a third 33.3 % of journalism workforce in the 522 companies surveyed” around the world. The study also identified that women represented one-third (38.7 %) in the senior management position in the companies surveyed compared to men that represented nearly two thirds (61.3%).²

Such concern about participation of women as a work force in the field of journalism can be observed in the context of Nepal. Nepal falls far behind the global average work force. Based on the Federation of Nepali Journalist, (an umbrella organization of journalists in Nepal) membership, the latest data stands at 18 per cent of women journalist all over Nepal out of 13,050 members.³

¹ UN Women 1995

² Byerly 2011

³ FNJ 2019

Despite the fact that there are low number of representation of women journalists compared to male journalists, there is increasement in participation of women journalists in Nepal. *Asmita*, one of the first such publication registered in 1988, that represented the voices of women took stock of women journalists in early 1990s. Presenting the findings in the 19th edition of the magazine, the report found 12.32 per cent of the total number of journalists in Nepal were women.⁴ The survey was conducted among the government run media houses viz. Nepal TV, Radio Nepal, Gorkhapatra and National News Agency (RSS).

In the last 30 years, there is positive sign towards increasing number of women journalists, but concerns towards equal participation, their involvement in the decision making role in the news media, sustainability in the news room, facilities provided to them and improvement of portrayal of women by the news media has been a focal point of discussion to understand the situation of women journalists.

Different researches conducted through gender lens has shown participants of women journalists are not in par with the male counterpart. Either taking in consideration the presence of women journalists in the newsroom or the sources cited by the news media in the news content are male dominated.

One of such research conducted by Sancharika Samuha showed that the participation of women in journalism was limited to 25 per cent. However, the data of women journalist involvement in the senior most position was discouraging, with 1.5 per cent in the position when surveyed among influential media houses.⁵

Out of 1,143 female journalists surveyed only 8.1 per cent work as editor but these numbers are generally representative of the media house who is owned by themselves or their families. At least, 3.6 percent of women work as chief reporters while 2.9 percent of them worked as senior correspondents/bureau chief and 2.7 percent of them as publishers or managers. Nepal is yet to see women journalists in the position of an editor-in-chief for any of the mainstream national dailies or television broadcasting stations in the present scenario after 1990s.

In this context, to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and also to promote balanced portrayal of women in the news

⁴ Chettri 2008

⁵ Sancharika Samuha 2016

content, this study seeks to bring into understanding the current trend in situating women journalists in Nepal.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the situation of working women journalists in Nepal.
2. To explore the needs of the women journalist to empower them. (to identify the type of training required, mentoring requirements to enhance the representation)

Type equation here.

Women in Journalism

The establishment of democracy in Nepal in 1951 A.D., that marked the end of the autocratic family regime of the Ranas resulted to the establishments of political rights to the people of Nepal. This political change in Nepal granted equal legal rights to women, which is a milestone towards empowerment of women in Nepal. The political change heralded towards publication of print news outlet under the editorship of women.

Although the history of mass media in Nepal dates back to 1851 A.D, it was only in April 1951 A.D. the first monthly magazine co-edited by women editors Kamakshya Devi and Sadhana Pradhan was published by Nepal Mahila Sangathan viz. 'Mahila' (Women). In the editorial message the publication pointed out that Rana regime was responsible for degrading women's situation in Nepal and called upon men to support for the cause of women, which further pointed out the role of men and women for unity and equality.⁶

In the same year, 'Prabha' monthly magazine was published and the later year 'Prativa' monthly magazine appeared in the Nepali market. However, the magazine published under women editorship could not sustain. The participation of women in Nepali media was noticed once the Nepal Television was established in 1984 AD.

“Despite such an independent beginning of women's role and space in the media decades ago, women could not really make a huge difference until later... women did not enjoy an influential role in media even in 2046 BS (1990 AD), when People's Movement was underway. The end of the movement and the new political atmosphere brought about some change.”⁷

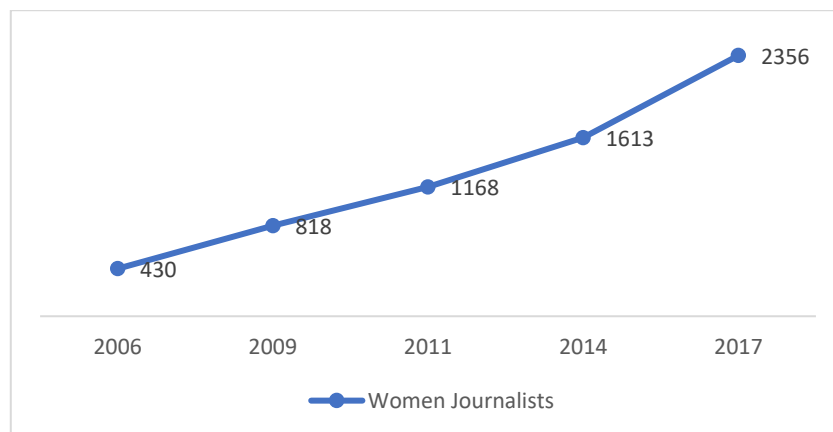
⁶ Devkota 1994

⁷ Sancharika Samuha 2016

The restoration of democracy in 1990's brought about the change in political and social sphere which favoured rise of number of privately-owned media houses in Nepal. The democratic condition paved a way to establish and practice right to freedom of the press. With the rise of number of news media, there was rise in number of women journalists.

In one of such studies conducted by Sancharika Samuha in 2006 AD., has identified through its survey that women journalist's involvement in Nepal since 1981A.D with gradual increasement of participants of women in journalism over the years. The study showed that there were 2.7 per cent of women journalist entering in the field of journalism between 1981- 1985 A.D. Between 2001 to 2006 A.D., the total number of journalists entering the field reached to 53.1 per cent. The survey was conducted among 224 women journalists and communicators, where it was estimated that there were more than 4,000 journalists in Nepal.⁸

Fig. 1. Women journalists membership in FNJ



Source: Federation of Nepalese Journalist

According to FNJ, the membership of female journalists has grown exponentially over the years. There is an increase of 448 per cent of female journalists' participation since 2006.

Different studies in Nepal show that inclusion of women in the media sector is comparatively low as compared to the male. Studies undertaken to situate media with the gender lens have focused towards situating women journalists through baseline surveys, inclusion of women in media, representation of women in the media content with respect to portrayal of women and sources used in the news media.

⁸ Rana et.al. 2016.

Media and gender related studies in Nepal

The baseline survey studies have identified major challenges and concerns about situating women journalist in Nepal. Different survey reports on women in Nepali media have highlighted the enrolment of women journalists with respect to low participants in the media compared to men. The surveys conducted by major stakeholders such as Sancharika Samuha in the last 15 years brings out baseline understanding with respect to the education level, birth place, marital status, concerns about discrimination and gender friendly environment in the media, their wages, facilities provided to them by the media houses, problems faced by women journalists in Nepal.

In its study conducted in 2006 viz. *Status of Women Communicators* had surveyed 224 women communicators covering 48 districts in Nepal. The study pointed out that more than 50 per cent of women communicators had passed the bachelor's level, it also outlined that more unmarried women were engaged in the field and identified that women leaving the profession after getting married was a 'partial truth.' The study also showed difficulty for women to sustain their jobs compared to men because of family and social structure prevalent in Nepal. The study even found that women journalists faced major challenges such as discrimination in appointment, promotion, wages, capacity building opportunities, work without appointment letter, weak infrastructure in office, reaching higher position among others.

Another study conducted by Sancharika Samuha in 2016 viz. *Women Journalists in Nepal* with larger sample size of 1,143 respondents found that women aged between 20 to 30 years was most active in the field of journalism. Only 21.9 percent of women journalists pursued professional journalism courses in college and only 41.8 percent of them completed Bachelors' level. The study pointed out that women journalists felt that the media houses are not fair while giving them promotion. There is tendency of women journalists changing the working organization because of irregular payment, lack of opportunities, motivation or encouragement. At least 19.2 per cent of respondents have felt gender discrimination with respect to payment and 24.9 per cent have felt discrimination while handling responsibilities.

The study has identified that quitting the profession in the midway as the major setback to women's role and influence in the journalism sector. According to the editors or editorial teams in the media houses, women 'lack the needed competence or efficiency' to move ahead in the field is said in the report.

A study on *Media and Gender in Nepal* published by International Federation of Journalist in 2015, was also based on survey, interviews and case studies, has concluded that “the working environment within media organizations does not seem congenial enough to enable them to grow and progress easily.” It is because women journalists are not taken seriously as their male colleagues and they feel their contributions are not valued and subject to discrimination and harassment from within as well as outside their organizations. The study also points out the need to formulate and implement gender friendly policies and institutional mechanisms to deal with concerns of sexual harassment cases or incidents of gender bias.

Apart from baseline survey reports, studies have been conducted on inclusion issues of women in media. One such collection of study report published by Martin Chautari on *Inclusion in Media* has highlighted the issue of inclusion with respect to diversity of culture and ethnic representation and women at large in the media sector. The book delves on different aspect of inclusion concerns in Nepali media. The study has brought into discourse the need for inclusion in the media and has recommended the need for positive discrimination to promote women journalists with respect to appointment, promotion, opportunities for skills development among others to enhance the situation of women journalists.

Studies on representation of women in the news content have also been conducted to bring out evidences about participation of women journalist’s role in the production of news. Many of the report produced by Freedom Forum since 2016, has identified the major gap that does not exceed to more than 20 per cent of women’s role in news production in the print and online news media be it in the presence of byline news or citing the news female news sources. In its latest report conducted between April to June 2019 has identified that there were 13 per cent and 17 per cent byline news by women reporters in print and online news media content respectively. At least 22 per cent op-ed articles were written by women. Women sources comprised of 13 per cent and 10 per cent in print and online media respectively.⁹

A study on Gender Representations in the Nepali Press during Pre-Conflict, Conflict and Post-Conflict Periods : Examining gender coverage in Nepali newspapers of 1994-2014, also presented a grim situation where the content analysis representing sample of 4000 news stories in three broadsheet dailies of Nepal showed the number of women who were either quoted, interviewed was limited to eight per cent in 2014, much less compared to figure in 2004.¹⁰

⁹ Freedom Forum 2019

¹⁰ Koirala 2018

The study finds that media discourse in Nepal still belongs to the male domain.

All these studies reinforce the fact with evidence that representation of women in Nepali media is dominated by male be it in numbers of women in journalistic workforce, whose impact can be felt in the production of content. This scenario emphasis the needs for policy shift in recruitment of human resource, encourage women participation in decision making process such as editors of the media, also the need to increase women's participation at the top government offices and other sectors who are often cited as sources for the news sources. Despite these challenges, efforts to develop gender friendly environment has been advocated at the policy level and even in the media houses.

Efforts for gender friendly media

Efforts to make news media gender friendly has resulted to some achievements since the BPfA World Conference. Reviewing the achievements in the aftermath of the world event, Nepal has made some gains in the field of media.

A conference report to assess and review the implementation of Beijing +15 has pointed out 5 major key points of 'gains' in the Nepali media landscape in 2009 A.D. It has pointed out that the step of Government of Nepal to include one woman journalist in the media monitoring mechanism at district level, gender training and orientation for have been conducted through the country, women feature service on issues related to women with the objective of mainstreaming gender issues are given importance by the news media, portrayal of women has changed and the issues of women have started to receive priority, and improvements in the allocation, sensitivity and style of writing on women's issues.¹¹

Since the review of Beijing +15 conference in Nepal, there has been a significant change in the country's political domain, with the introduction of new constitution, Constitution of Nepal, 2015. The constitution has underpinned the quota system for the participation of women and different ethnic groups in the public sector. It has adopted the principle of proportional inclusion where women have right to participate in all bodies of the state.

¹¹ Rana 2009

Since the adoption of the constitution, the representation of women at the state bodies has significantly increased, where Nepal has the women President, the Speaker of the House of Representative, Chief Justice in the key position of state governance. Still at large the local, province and parliament elections has further enhanced the representation of the women in the elected bodies with at least 40 per cent of women participation. The representation of women in the political domain is the result of legal protection provided that by the constitution and the enactment of laws.

Ensuring representation of women in the field of media through legal protection in the government run news media and state mechanism such as Media Council, Advertising Board and other monitoring mechanism have been initiated. As Nepal is set to establish a federal system of governance, the women advocacy group on media have been advocating the need to draft the laws related to news media to be gender-friendly, with respect to representation of women in the formation of government committees and board as envisaged by the law.

Nita Pandit, President of Sancharika Samuha points out that, including women in such board and committees of the government could be a means to enhance the voices of women in the news media and also in the policy formulation process.¹²

Different government reports and policy have pointed out the need to form inclusive media. One of the such report by High level Commission on Media on Inclusion- 2069 has categorically suggested the criteria for national news media, which should have gender policy, use the guidelines of government to ensure inclusion in the news media, women friendly management in the office, provide opportunity to women in the production, editing, and major role of the news media.¹³

Recently, Nepal has introduced legislation addressing sexual harassment at workplace. The Sexual Harassment at Workplace Prevention Act, 2015, is also a major step that aims to create secured, dignified, and healthy working environment at the workplace.

Despite these efforts initiated at the government level to make a gender friendly media such efforts are in the beginning phase. The study by Sancharika Samuha, with respect to gender-policy in place in the news organization has shown that only 14.7 per cent of the media houses claiming that they had separate gender policy where 23.5 per cent of the media organization

¹² Nita Pandit, interview by Indira Aryal, Kathmandu, August 7, 2019.

¹³ High Level Commission Report on Inclusion of Media 2012

remained silent where 61.9 per cent of the media houses said that they did not have separate gender policy.¹⁴

In the report those who claimed to have gender policy informed that shift system was maintained where female journalists were asked to attend the duties in the morning than late evening shifts, the women journalists were given the maternity leave, festival leave, among others. They also said that they had been prioritizing security to female journalists and managing separate toilets for them. Likewise, they said that they give top priority to female candidates while hiring new staff.

The study also pointed out that main-stream media in and outside Kathmandu Valley did not have such gender policies and even those who claimed to have such policies did not provide such documents.

However, Kantipur Media Group one of the largest media house in the Nepal have developed an internal Workplace Harassment Policy. The harassment is similar to that of the Harassment Act, 2015.

Efforts are underway to develop gender friendly media at the policy level through government initiative, even initiation by inhouse media policy, indicates the fact that inclusion of women in the field of journalism needs an affirmative action basically by the private news media institutions of Nepal to increase the participation, that would bring changes in the portrayal of women in the news media.

¹⁴ Sancharika Samuha 2016

Chapter 2: Research Methods

The study uses both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand the status of women journalists. Using both the approach means bringing into understanding what the women journalists themselves say about their situation through survey, and qualitative approach such as key-informant interviews and focus group discussion brings into perspectives of senior journalists, editors, advocacy organizations pointing out the problems in the field. Before conducting the survey and KII and FGD, desk review was conducted to understand on different studies conducted gender and media in Nepal. Detail study reports findings on the relevant study was reviewed to bring into perspective about the major problems that has been identified on gender and media.

Survey: A survey was conducted among 87 women journalists working in the Kathmandu valley, to understand their status and their perspective in the major news media institution. An online survey form was developed using <http://sogosurvey.com>, and was distributed online to more than 250 women journalists, where 87 of them filled up the form. The online survey was open from 13th August 2019 to 8th September 2019. The survey was participated by women journalists from print, broadcast and online news media in Nepal.

Key- Informant Interviews: The interviews were conducted with editors, senior working journalists, to bring into perspectives to understand the ways how newsroom have changed, and development of gender friendly environment. At least 7 key informant interviews were conducted to understand the scenario of women journalists. (The list of reference is attached in the Appendix)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): At least one focus group discussion was conducted to explore the needs of women journalists and identify the trends in the newsroom. The focus group discussion was mixed with male and female participants. The FGD was participated by eight people, researcher, academics, journalists, photojournalists.

Limitation of the Study

The survey of respondents was limited within the working journalists in the Kathmandu valley.

Chapter 3. Data Analysis

The chapter discusses on the findings of the study. The first section deals with the quantitative analysis of the data based on the survey results. The second section deals with the qualitative findings based on the key informant interview and focus group discussion.

3.1. Facts about women journalists

Fig.2. Age Group

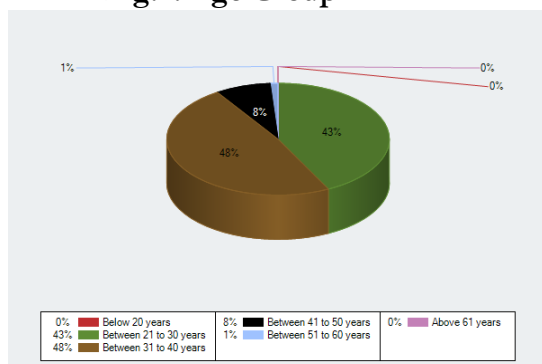
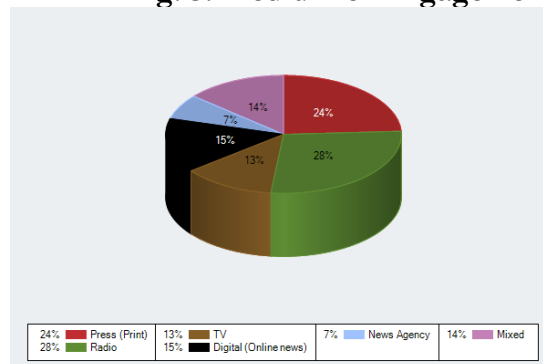


Fig. 3. Medium of Engagement



More than two- third of women journalists in Kathmandu valley are young. The workforce comprises of women journalists fall between the age between 20 to 40 years. Nearly half of the journalists are mid-career journalists, with at least 48 per cent belong to the age group between 31 to 40 years, followed by 43 per cent of journalist belong to age group 21 to 30 years.

1/3rd of the journalists who participated in the survey said they work in the radio i.e. 28 per cent, followed by 24 per cent work in the print media, 15 per cent in the online news media, 13 per cent in television, 7 per cent in the news agency and 14 per cent in mixed news media. Mixed news media refers to working in digital and other news media.

Fig. 4. Ownership of news media

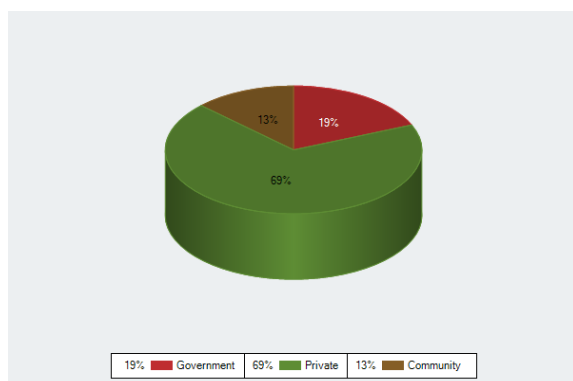
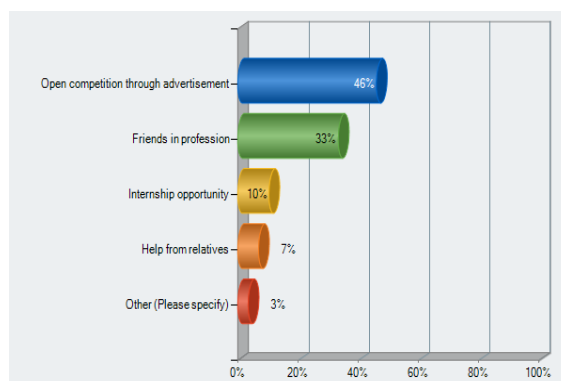


Fig. 5. Enrollment in present job



Majority of respondents said that they work for the private news media. At least 69 per cent said that they work in private news media whereas 19 per cent said they work for government news media and 13 per cent said that they work for community media.

Near about majority of journalists said that they got enrolled in the present media house through open competition. 46 per cent of the respondents said they entered the profession through open competition, whereas more than one third of the respondents (33 per cent) said that they obtained the job through recommendation of friends. 10 per cent of the respondents entered the job by enrolling themselves as an intern to the news media and 3 per cent said that their relatives supported them to get the job.

Fig. 6. Designation of women journalists

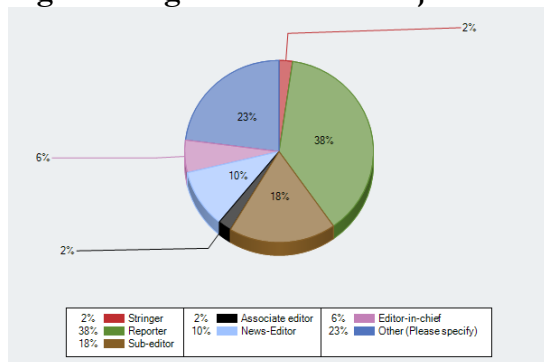
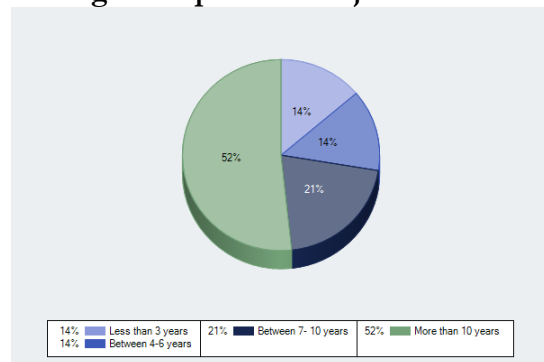


Fig. 7. Experience in journalism



As per their position, more than one-third of the women journalists that comprise of 38 per cent of work as reporter and 18 per cent of journalists work as sub-editors. Only 6 per cent of women journalists said they are the editor-in-chief of the media organization, but all these women journalists working in the position belongs to online news portals. 23 per cent of women journalists are either the news anchor, television cameraperson, photojournalists and program producers in the news media.

More than half of the journalists said they have more than 10 years of experience in journalism. 21 per cent of them said they have experience between 7 to 10 years.

Fig. 8. Academic qualification

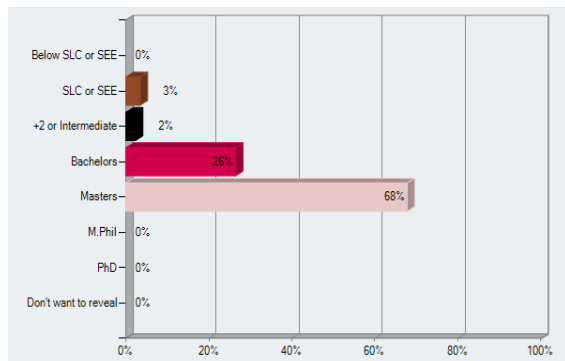
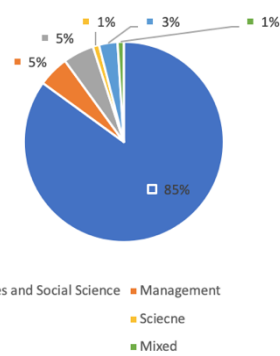


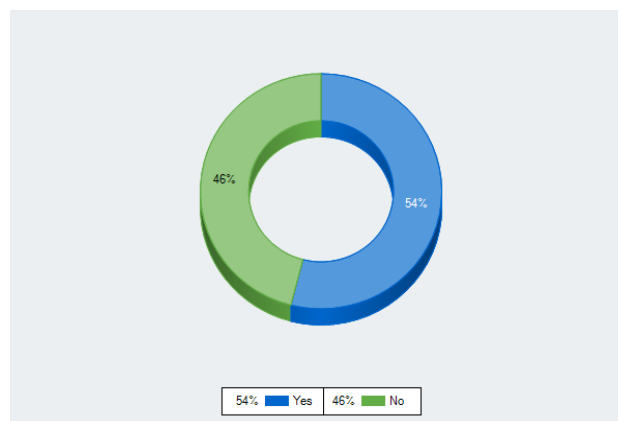
Fig. 9. Faculty of study



In terms of academic qualification, more than two third of the respondents are graduate. Majority of journalists have master’s degree (68 per cent) and 26 per cent of respondents have at least bachelor’s degree.

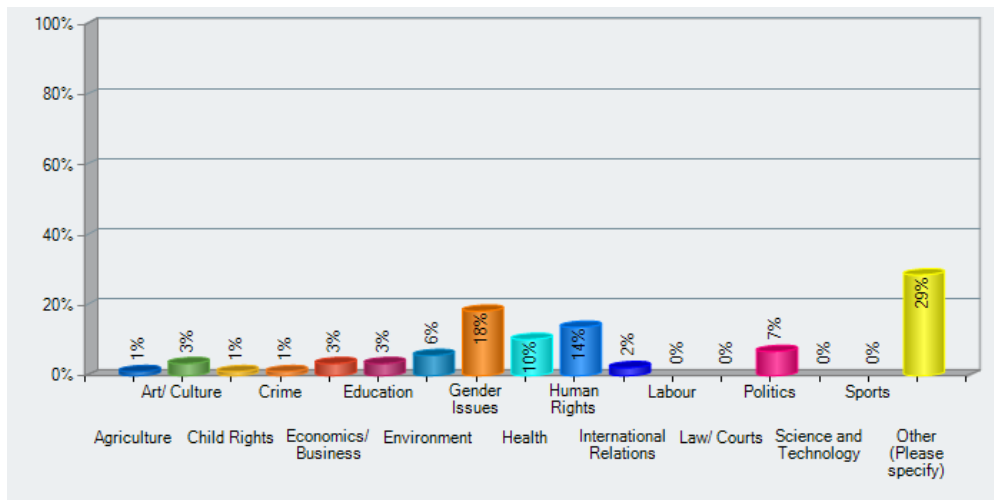
Women journalists that enter in the field of journalism comes from the Humanities and Social Science background. More than two-third of respondents said that they come from the Humanities and Social Science background. Very few journalists come from other faculties. Only one journalist has claimed that she has degree from faculty of law and humanities and social science.

Fig. 10. Academic degree in journalism



Majority of the respondents said that they have an academic degree in journalism. This shows that there is tendency to obtain academic degree in journalism to work as a journalist in Nepal.

Fig. 11. Major subject area of news reporting (Beat Reporting)



Reporting on diversity of issues have increased by women journalists in Kathmandu valley. Though 18 per cent of women said that they report mainly on gender issues, the subject areas of news reporting have diversified. 14 per cent of the respondents said that they report on human rights concerns, 10 per cent focus on health issues and concerns. At least 7 per cent of the respondents said they report on core political issues. With respect to the reporting on other than the specified topic given in choices, 29 per cent of the respondents, were mainly engaged in news production, news anchoring and some had to report on all the issues that was asked by the media house.

Women journalists mainly report on social concerns issues but less towards technical fields such as economics and science and technology. The academic background must have affected their choice of reporting as more than two-third of women journalist come from the background of humanities and social science and very few come from the academic background of management and science background such as physics, chemistry, biology etc.

The fact that women journalists have diversified their focus area apart from reporting only in gender issues, they are building up expertise writing news reports on different issues. The academic qualification they have earned and with the diversification of reporting issues and expertise, the respondents are of the view that sustaining living through journalism is possible. Majority of respondents said that sustaining living from the payment they receive from the media house is ‘satisfactory.’

3.2. Sustainability, working environment and challenges of women journalists

At least 48 per cent of the respondents said they are ‘satisfied’ with the payment, whereas 2 per cent of the journalists said they are ‘very satisfied’ and can sustain the living. Whereas 31 per cent of respondents said they are ‘dissatisfied’ and 7 per cent said they are ‘very dissatisfied.’ 5 per cent of the respondents said that ‘the payment is irregular.’

Fig. 12. Sustaining living from the salary

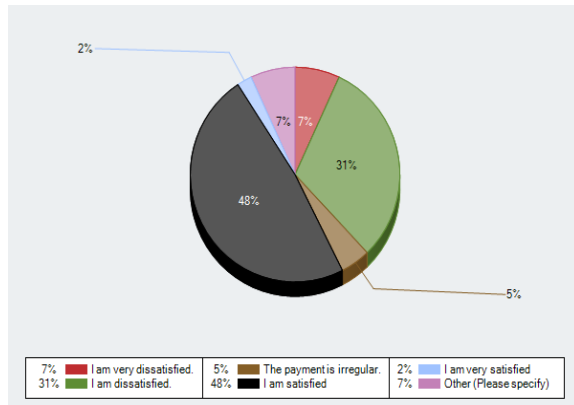
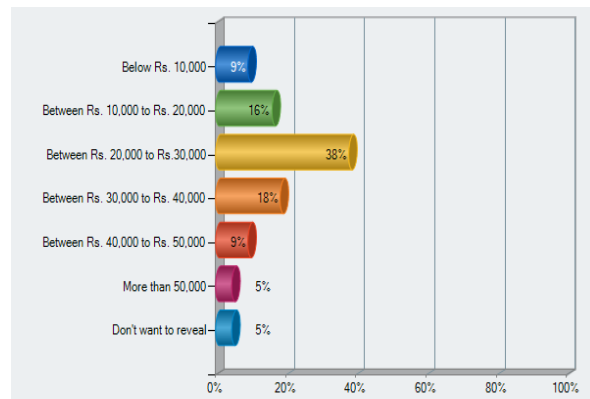


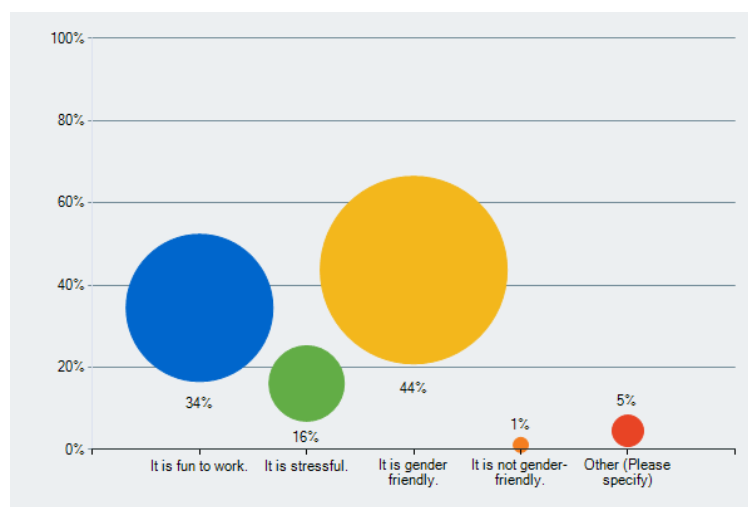
Fig. 13. Salary scale



Majority of women journalists receive salary above Rs. 20,000 per month. At least 38 per cent of respondents said that they receive salary from Rs. 20,000 to 30,000. 18 per cent receive salary between Rs. 30,000 to 40,000. There are also women journalists who said that they receive salary above Rs. 50,000 per month. Still at large, 20 per cent of journalists receive salary of less than Rs. 20,000 per month.

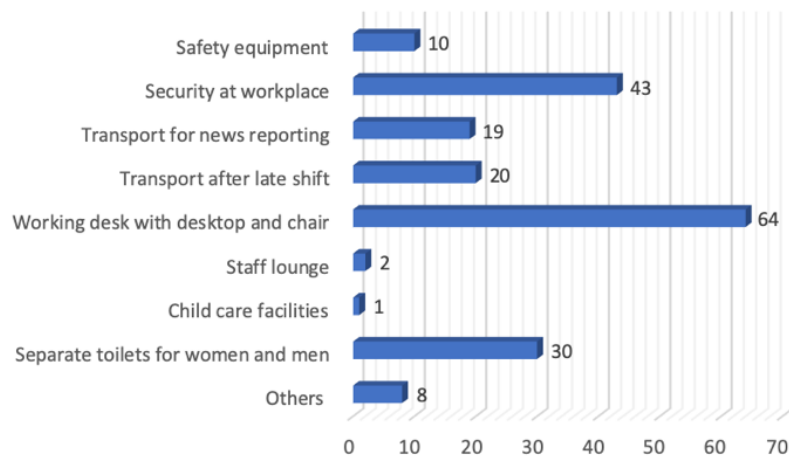
The satisfaction level of women journalists also has to do with the working environment of the newsroom. The respondents working in the news outlets in Kathmandu have outlined that the working environment is gender- friendly.

Fig. 14. Working environment



At least 44 per cent of the respondents said the working environment in the newsroom is gender- friendly. 34 per cent said that ‘it was fun to work’ in the newsroom. Only 16 per cent of journalists said that ‘it was stressful’ and 1 per cent said that the newsroom was not gender friendly.’ Rest 5 per cent pointed out that it was ‘good’ to work.

Fig. 15. Facilities & support by media house



(Multiple choice question)

This indicates the fact that working environment in the Kathmandu based news media houses are improving. These changes can be considered a result of activism by women journalists, women rights organization activities in the last three-decade to bring into understanding the gender sensitive concerns on behalf of media houses.

Out of 87 respondents nearly two-third of the respondents said that they had the facility of working desk and desktop computers and chair. Nearly half of the respondents said that they feel secured at the workplace. At least 30 respondents said they had the facility of separate washrooms. The newsrooms have the facility of transport for reporting news, transport facility to drop home after the late shift. Only one of the journalists from Nepal Television said she received facility of child-care.

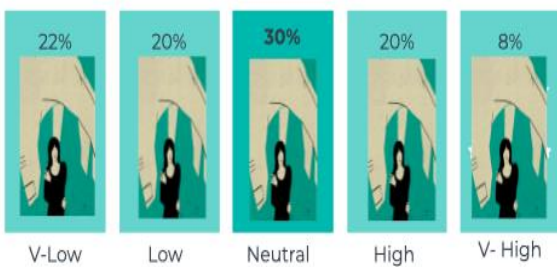
Despite certain level of changes adopted in the newsroom, women journalists working in Kathmandu do face certain degree of challenges with respect to character assassination, controlling in their work, death threats and hate speech, sexual harassment and warning in their workplace.

Following Infographics deals with the challenges of women journalists.

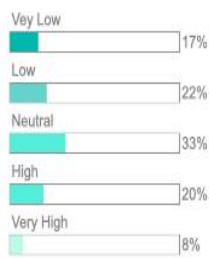


CHALLENGES OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS

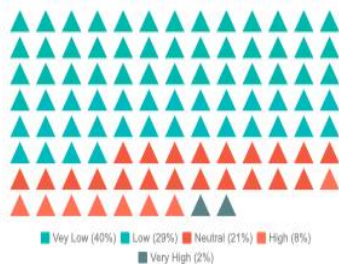
1. CHARACTER ASSASSINATION



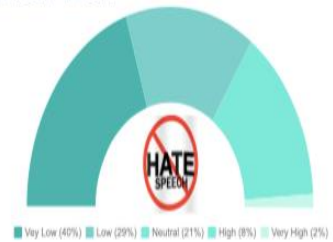
2. CONTROL



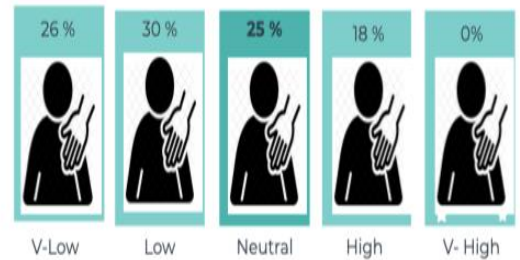
3. DEATH THREATS



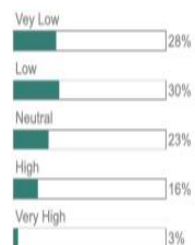
4. HATE SPEECH



5. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

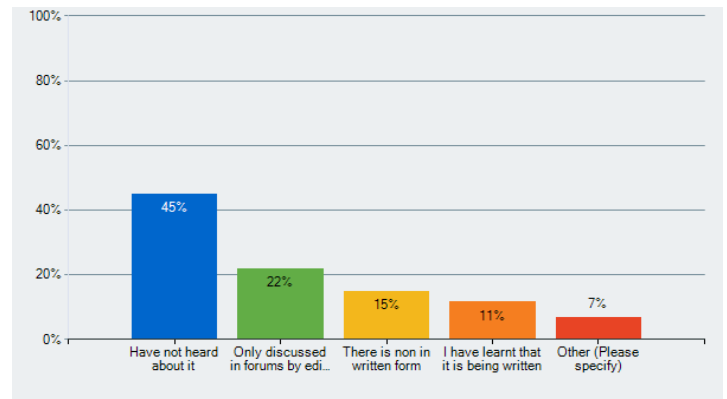
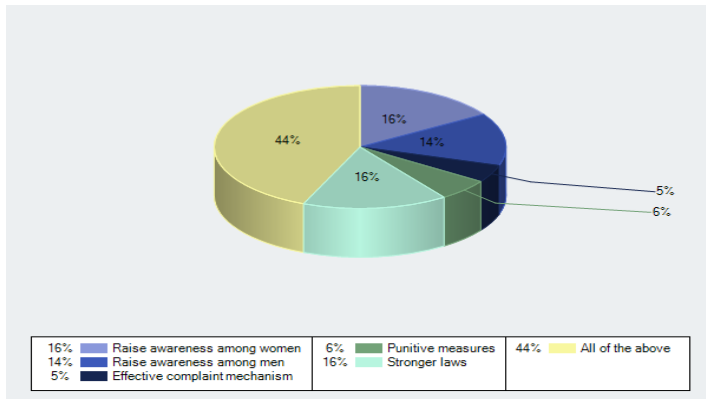


6. WARNING



Nearly half of the respondents were of the view that the effective measures to combat sexual harassment is to use combined strategy such as raising awareness among women and men, develop effective complaint mechanism, strengthen punitive measures and stronger laws.

Fig. 16. Measures to combat sexual harassment **Fig. 17. Policy on sexual harassment**



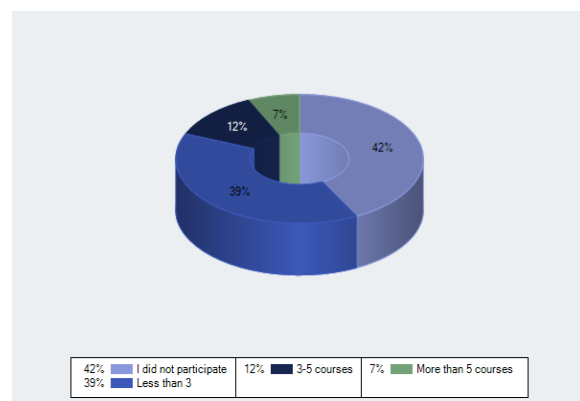
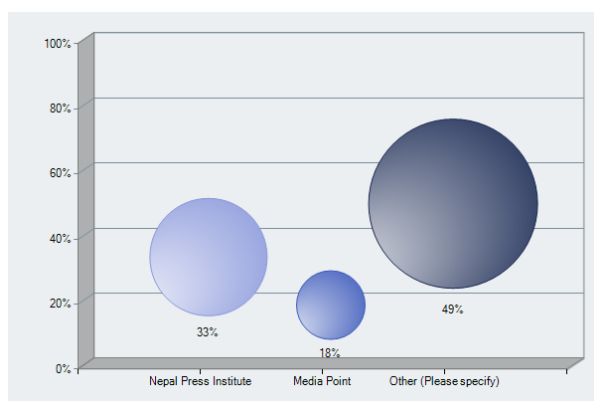
With respect to policy within their organization on sexual harassment nearly half of the respondents (45 per cent) said that they had not heard about such policy in the organization. 22 per cent of the respondents said the topic is discussed in the forums by the editors, 15 per cent said such harassment policies are not in the written form, 11 per cent said that it was being written.

3.3. Capacity building opportunities and needs

The study also assessed the training needs of women journalists. Majority of journalists of 51 per cent received training from the major training institute viz. Nepal Press Institute and Media Point. However, 49 per cent of journalists said they received training other training institute other than these institutes.

Fig. 18. Training on journalism

Fig. 19. Participated in training (last 2- years)

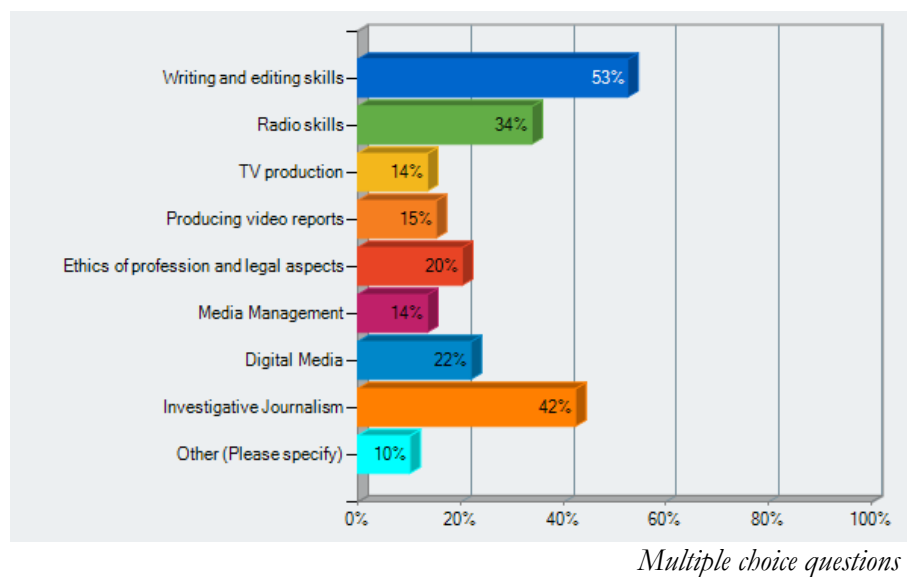


The data indicates that fact that there is increasing trend towards journalists receiving training from other institutions other than older training institution such as NPI and Media Point. Trainings courses are offered by national organizations such as Center for Investigative Journalism Nepal, Federation of Nepalese Journalists, Sancharika Samuha, Photojournalists Club, Asia Media Forum, Media Foundations, RJ Training Center, Aavas, Center for Women Development. The journalists also have received training course provided by the US Embassy and British Embassy based in Kathmandu. They have also received training from international organization's such as BBC, Radio Netherlands Training Center, DW Academy and Interlink Academy.

At least 58 per cent of respondents said that they have participated in the training in the last two years. 39 per cent of the respondents said they participated in less than 3 courses, 12 per cent said that they have participated courses for between 3 to 5 courses, 7 per cent of them said they have participated in the course for more than 5 courses in the last two years timeframe.

However, 42 per cent of the respondents said that they have not been involved in training course in the last two years.

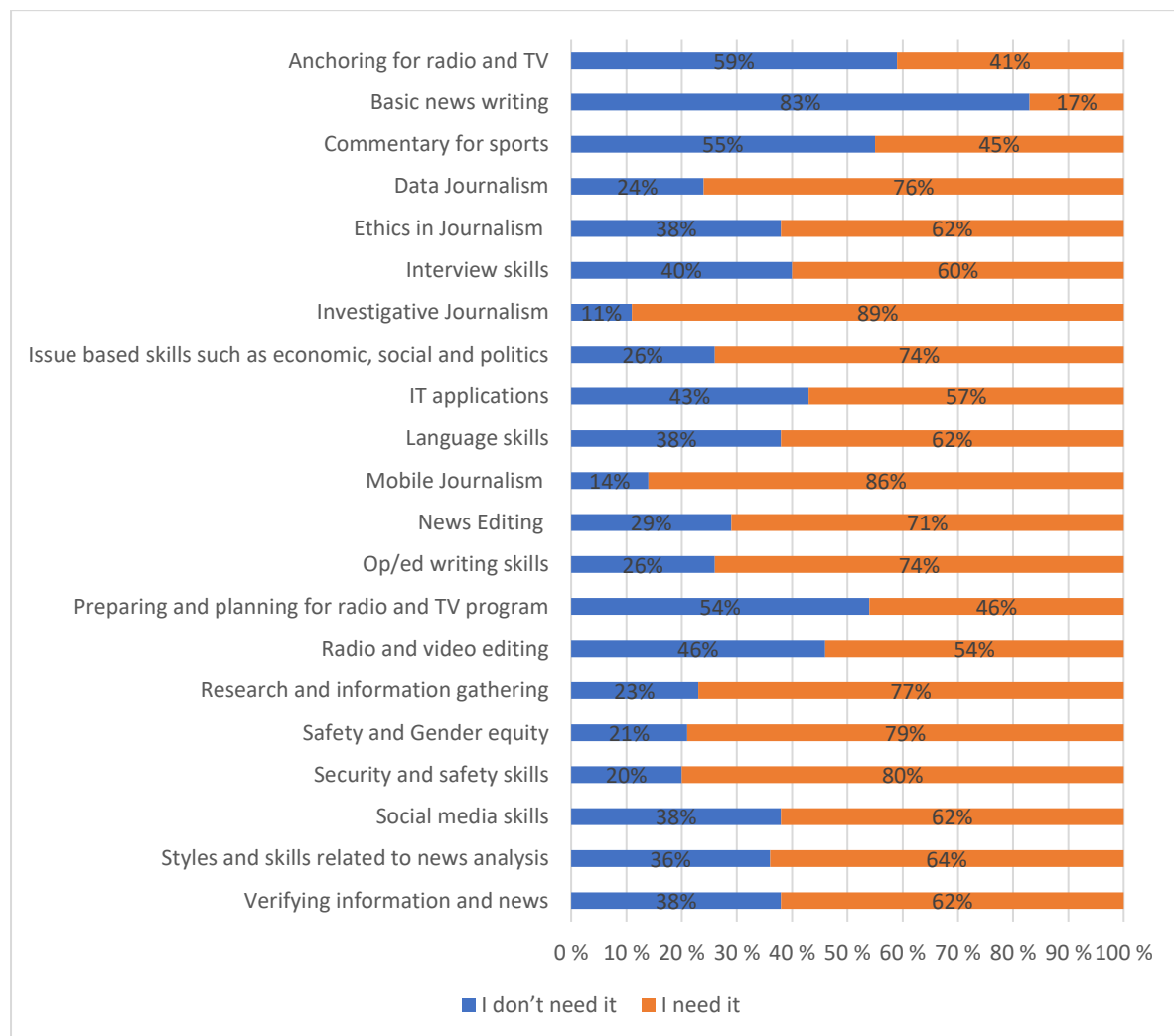
Fig. 20. Training course participated



Majority of women journalists said that they obtained training courses to writing and editing skills, 42 per cent of the journalists said they participated in investigative journalism training, 34 per cent said they have taken radio skills training. 14 per cent of journalists said they have received TV production training, 15 per cent said they have participated in video producing training and 22 per cent said that have participated in digital media training.

Women journalists have pointed out that they have somewhat received basic news writing training in general. However, majority of journalists feel that they require specific training skills. At least 83 per cent of respondents said that they did not require basic news writing. But with respect to other training needs, majority of them have demanded specific training requirements as shown in the figure. Two- third of respondents feel the need of data journalism, investigative journalism, issue-based training, mobile journalism, research and information gathering, safety and gender equity, security and safety training.

Fig. 21. Training needs to improve their skills



Chapter 4. Qualitative Interviews

This section deals with the findings from the key informant interviews and focus group discussion with the women journalists, senior journalists, editors and advocacy organizations and other media stakeholders to bring an understanding on the situation of women journalists in the present context. The stakeholders have pointed out four major concerns they are: representation of women journalists, professionalism concerns, portrayal of women in news media and capacity building opportunities.

4.1. Increasing representation, retention a challenge

The study has identified that there is an increasing trend of young female journalists to opt for joining the field of journalism in Nepal. From the FGD and KII, and also through the secondary data sources, informed that enrollment of women journalists in the field of journalism is increasing. This is even justified by the fact that enrollment of female students in journalism education is also increasing in Nepal.

According to Lekhnath Pandey, Lecturer at Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of Tribhuvan University female students to study journalism has ever increased in the past decade. “In the last ten years of time frame more than 60 per cent or more students enrolled in journalism education are female” said Pandey.¹⁵

This indicates that production of women journalists is increasing with the possibility of them getting into journalism. Even advocacy organization such as Sancharika Samuha and Working Women Journalists have also pointed out that representation of women journalist as core human resource in the media sector is increasing. President of Sancharika Samuha, Nita Pandit said that the number has increased to 25 per cent which was only limited to 12 per cent in the past, mainly because women journalists are hired by broadcast news media, but the number is low in the print media.¹⁶ Even the survey for this study also has pointed out the fact that 41 per cent of women journalists work in the broadcast news media where only 24 per cent are engaged in the print news media.

¹⁵ Lekhnath Pandey, FGD participant, Kathmandu, September 10, 2019.

¹⁶ Pandit, interview

Despite the changes in the news media there still persists challenge to retain women journalists in the field. ‘Continuity in journalism is a serious challenge which has affected overall news media scenario.’¹⁷

During KII’s and FGD participants informed that the better payments in other fields such as I/NGOs, jobs in international agencies and going abroad have been the final destination to experienced women journalists. However, this tendency is also found in male journalists. But the challenge is to find such experienced women journalists are few compared to men, which results to filling up the gap by the male rather than women in such position.¹⁸

Male journalists that participated in the FGD claimed that taking up the position as journalists was used as a ladder to land in the jobs of such international agencies or go abroad. This is typical a trend in the newsroom that have English editions. That is why in most of the senior positions in English based news media are vacant.

However, the situation is also not that bleak. One of the influential Nepali national daily, Nagarik Daily has three bureau chiefs in the organization and are handling the lead position of art and entertainment, coordinator in Butwal, social bureau. “The process of engaging women journalists in key position has already begun in our news organization with at least three bureaus led by women and tendency to report on different news beat.”¹⁹

Despite such positive indication, there still exists barrier in the field of journalism for women journalists in Nepal.

4.5. Barriers for women journalists

The trend towards analyzing barriers for women journalists are basically linked with pay inequity, the struggle to balance work and family, glass ceiling in the news media. The study has tried to assess the extent to which such barriers affect female journalists.

Laxmi Basnet, a reporter at Himal Khabar magazine who has spent 15 years stinct in journalism said that balancing work and family poses a major challenge. “The profession is more challenging

¹⁷ Amika Rajthala, interviewed by Indira Aryal, Kathmandu, August 14, 2019

¹⁸ Pandit, interview

¹⁹ Tilak Pathak, interviewed by Indira Aryal, Kathmandu, September 16, 2019.

for married women and mothers. It is hard to sustain in the field because of social and economic reasons and family burden.”²⁰

She even pointed out that pregnancy is critical phase and unfortunately many of the media houses does not have provisions for leave resulting to women journalists leave the profession. “I was lucky that I was granted three months leave and have been able to raise my two children.” This has to do with the newsroom environment. Female journalists during the study have indicated some level of improvement working in the news room of Kathmandu, the survey results showed that 44 per cent of journalists have said that news room was gender friendly, 34 per cent said that it was fun to work and only 16 per cent said it was stressful.

Certain level of flexibility is observed in the newsroom functioning with respect to women journalists. In the FGD Shruti Shrestha a photojournalist from Kantipur Daily pointed out that there is tendency to understand the situation of woman journalist at least in her newsroom, which has supported her in managing her home affairs and office duties.

There are also concerns pledged my senior women journalists, who in their work life have experienced practice of glass ceiling in the news media. Poonam Poudel who has been in this field for the past 24 years, has pointed out discrimination between male and female with respect to ‘promotion’ in the news media house. “I worked for the 15 years stinct for Kantipur Television. I was only promoted for 3 times, where my male counterparts received promotion quickly. This resulted to make me feel suppressed during my career.”²¹

Poudel further highlighted that women in the newsroom are taken for granted by the male colleagues and editors that has resulted deprive them from the responsibilities which they are capable of. This hegemonic nature in the workplace makes them feel that they are unable to cater responsibility which has suppressed female journalists adds Poudel.

However, such claims are considered invalid by a male editor, who has stayed in the editorial position in major news media houses of Nepal. Tirtha Koirala editor in-chief with the *Thabakbhar* online news portal and former news chief with the Kantipur Television said that only being women and asking for equal participation is not sufficient; the female journalists need to

²⁰ Laxmi Basnet, interviewed by Indira Aryal, Kathmandu, August 28, 2019.

²¹ Poonam Poudel, interviewed by Indira Aryal, Lalitpur, August 20, 2019.

be skillful in their field. He pointed out that women journalists are 'hesitant' to work in the odd hours and are unable to make strong decisions at times, this is where the intervention is required by providing them skills and empowerment training.²²

Such version is also experienced by other newsroom leader, who points out that women journalist doesn't feel comfortable working in the desk editing because it means working in the odd hour. "If they are not interested to work, we cannot force them to work on the basis of inclusion. Performance and experience are the first criteria reach to the decision-making level which can drive the results. None of the media are interested to give women the power without their performance and experience just to maintain the equality. Leadership is given on the basis of seniority and experience."²³

To some extent female journalist also accept the fact that they need to increase their strength through reporting. "Female reporters should have confidence on their reports, and they should have power to convince editor about their stories. Editors also seeing for good stories, and if you can give them the good one, editors start to believe you."²⁴

Despite such claims and counter-claims women advocates are of the view that economic disparity between male and female journalists is high. The payment is unequal despite of the similar position and nature of job.²⁵

During the study, the female journalists were asked whether they discussed about the salary with their male counterparts in the survey. The survey results showed that nearly half of the journalists discussed about the salary with male counterpart and the other half did not.

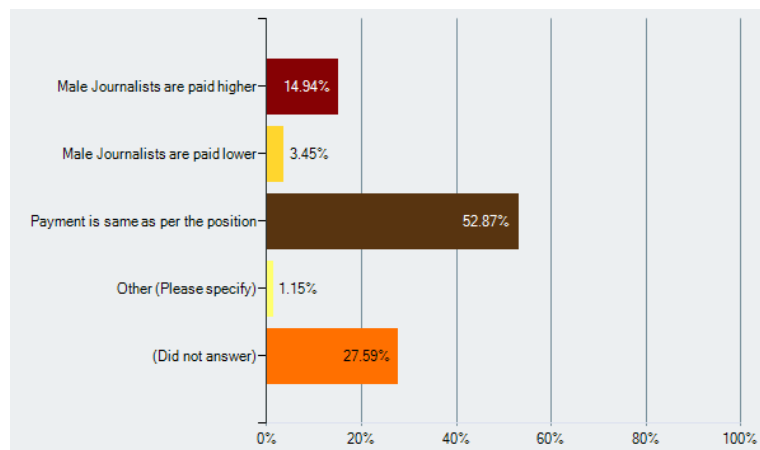
²² Tirtha Koirala, interviewed by Indira Aryal, Kathmandu, August 26, 2019.

²³ Pathak interview

²⁴ Basnet interview

²⁵ Pandit, interview

Fig. 22. Female journalists' perception towards payment between male and female



Majority of women said that the payment was similar as per the position recruited whereas nearly 15 per cent said that the male journalists were paid higher and 3 per cent said that the male journalists were paid lower. It is very difficult to pin-point the level of differences in payment based on gender. However, the wages provided to both male and female journalists in Nepal is low. The journalist organization such as FNJ has been lobbying to implement minimum wages fixed by Minimum Wages Fixation Committee. The government has pledged its support to implement the recommendation made by the committee, whereas the private news media are reluctant to implement the recommendations. In its latest report of 2019, the committee has recommended to increase wages of the journalists by 25 per cent. The committee has fixed the minimum pay based on different forms of news media to minimum of Rs. 16,000 to Rs. 29,500 per month.

Also, the latest technological advancement in the news media along with challenges inflicted by social media and new media domain has also affected female journalists. New media has posed challenges and raise issued of safety and harassment online.

The barriers to uplift women journalists are major concerns in the field; but representation of women in the news content is a delicate issue that surface around practicing journalists.

4.6. Representation of women in news content: Women as news sources

Portrayal of women in the news content is one of the means to influence in shaping the general perception of how we think about and live. Still at large presenting balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the news media is highly affected because of

overrepresentation of men in the newsroom. But this scenario has not changed but has much aggravated in the recent years as outlined in the longitudinal study.

In her PhD dissertation, Samikshya Koirala has sought to examine gender coverage in Nepali press during pre-conflict, conflict and post conflict periods of 1994 to 2014, she finds that ‘women in the news comprised only around 10 per cent of people in the news...women’s voices were largely absent in the work of news reporters...news stories about women were shorter in length and such stories received less prominent and placement... the news were more frequently represented with their family status than their men counterparts...common trend of bias, which contributes to recurring themes of the devaluation of women... most stories reinforce gender stereotypes by portraying women as victims and men as offenders...’²⁶

Such findings about the portrayal of women in the Nepali press points out the need to focus on change in content represented by the press. Even during the FGD, this issue was raised to understand how women news sources were valued.

The journalists pointed out that ‘information is key’ that determines the news value, the gendered role does not matter. They pointed out that majority of sources in the government and any of the institution is led by men, so searching for women sources cannot be considered valid. Male journalist in the FGD agrees to the fact that there is growing trend of women placement in the senior position, where the scenario of citing more women is possible in the future. But it depends upon the women source to the extent they are active and their relations with the journalists.

They were also of the view that women sources were ‘weak’ because they are not up to date about the information in their agency, whereas same information can be easily obtained from the male sources. So, whoever provides the information there is a tendency for journalists to seek information from those sources.

Despite such concerns, women journalists are of the view that there is deliberate bypassing the women sources even though they are capable. So, more women journalists could be a means to bring in the voices in the news media. Basnet said that “I am more conscious about the sources, both male and female but I give priority to women sources.”²⁷

²⁶ Koirala 2018

²⁷ Basnet, interview

Determining how news should be written also has to do with capacity of the journalists be it male or female. It requires proper capacity building approach on writing news that could address gender sensitive concerns in the news media.

4.7. Capacity building

Capacity building is one of the core areas that could support in improving the media content and development of professionalism among female journalists at large. Participants in the FGD and KII has pointed out that trainings to the media personal by the media house is very rare and is left out to the rights organizations and other institutions.

The survey results show that majority of female journalists have received some sort of training before entering into the field and also after enrolling in journalism. But still at large, female journalists despite receiving certain level of training they have pointed out the need of training in different aspects. This can lead to question the effectiveness of training provided that by the training institutions.

For e.g. the data of the survey respondents (see figure:) has pointed out that at least 42 per cent of female journalists have participated in the investigative journalism training but still at large 89 per cent of female journalists demands such training. This indicates that either there is fault in training of journalists, or the training demands are not fulfilled. This can also mean further investigative journalism is required. The survey also tried to evaluate the satisfaction level of journalists with current training programs, at least 59 of the respondents answered to the query.

Table 1. Satisfaction level of journalists with training programs

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Media training in Nepal responds to the needs to requirements of the journalists	56 %	3%	31 %	8 %	2%
Prevailing media training takes professional development of Nepali media community into consideration.	37 %	5%	3%	2%	53%
Media training in Nepal generally provides a reasonable level of transferring the skills of investigative journalism and the oversight role of the media	27 %	15 %	3%	5 %	50 %
Media training in Nepal keeps up with technology and is up to date	32%	15%	6%	3%	44%
The performance of media people who get training opportunities is evaluated.	37 %	22 %	2%		39 %

There is a clear commitment by the chief editor/management to sustain and develop the training.	29 %	19 %	2 %	5%	46%
Media training reflects on the professional performance of media people.	20 %	8 %	2 %	3 %	66 %
Training Courses are short and insufficient	73 %	8 %	14 %	3 %	2%

Source: Online Survey

The data above clearly indicates the satisfaction level of female journalists towards training programs launched in Nepal. Though there is timely response towards training provided by the organization, but majority of female journalists are ‘very dissatisfied’ by the training provided to them. One of the reasons behind is the short-term courses provided to them. Female journalists believe a-long term training is necessary.

This has also been identified in the FGD and KII’s that training opportunities were available provided by different institution in Nepal, but such training helped little to improve their skills. The advocacy organizations that provides training in Nepal should focus on need based training rather than short term training, which should range from basic to advanced level training, which could help to instill skills in journalists.²⁸

All these concerns with respect to turnover of women journalists, address the barriers, and capacity building issue, it is argued that such concerns to some extent could be addressed through policy at the government and in- house media policy.

4.8. Does policy matter?

During KII’s and FGD all the participants were of the view that formulation of policy not only at the state level, but also in-house media policy would be an important step to increase the female journalists in the news media and also support in bringing them in the topmost position. Unfortunately, the formulation of inhouse policy with respect to developing gender equality in media is still at the primary stage.

The participants of the FGD were of the view that turnover of women journalists is because of change in national policies for gender equity, and the national discourse on the need to enhance women in different field thus, affecting the state-run media like Gorkhapatra Corporation. The state policy on encouraging inclusion in the news media has resulted to appointment of women

²⁸ Pandit interview

journalists, which was not a priority in the past observes Prakriti Adhikari of the daily in the FGD. Sharing is experience, Adhikari informed that there were instances where a woman journalist had passed the written examination in an open competition taken by the daily but failed to pass in the interview. Had there been policy to the past such issue would not have emerged, said Adhikari.

With respect to the state-run news media, the policies initiated by the state is an obligation for them to execute which has slowly been translated into practice. However, a larger number of journalists work in the private owned news media. The private news media are market driven, and the compulsion of recruiting women journalists cannot be mandatory.

“The government is enforcing the law on women empowerment, but the private media houses are not forced to follow it. The private media houses should look at the equal opportunities on the basis of performance and experience.”²⁹

Despite no written policy, the private news media have also understood the fact that the newsroom needs to be inclusive. “There is no gender policy in media as a written form but now media are conscious about the gender equality and sensitive towards it.”³⁰

There is tendency of appointing interns in the news media in the major daily, where priority is provided to the female interns. The latest policy of Kantipur Daily is to enroll more women journalists through internship said Ganga B.C. District Bureau chief of the daily during the FGD.

Such changes in attitude at the leadership level means gender sensitive concerns are considered to be one of the major agenda, discussed in the newsroom of Kathmandu based media houses. However, bringing into understanding what actually makes gender equality in the news media itself matter of discussion.

There is discussion and advocacy at place in Nepal, to address the gender equality concerns, but drafting of policy as such which could give a picture in a documented form is still lacking. “The envisioning of proper document is must to say about we mean by gender equality, there is dire

²⁹ Pathak interview

³⁰ Pawan Acharya, interviewed by Indira Aryal, Lalitpur, September 3, 2019.

need of such policy document to tell different stakeholders that can later be translated into practice, this is urgency.”³¹

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

With the empirical evidences obtained through quantitative and qualitative analysis to assess the status of female journalists in Nepal, the study finds the advocacy towards empowerment of women has supported in the representation of female journalists in the field of journalism. There is an increase of at least 448 per cent of female journalists over the past 12 years. In 2006 there were 430 women journalists who had obtained membership of FNJ and now there are over 2,354.

The study also finds that female journalists working in the Kathmandu valley are academically sound; with 94 per cent of journalists have at least Bachelor’s degree. Among them majority of female journalists have an academic degree in journalism. Additionally, female journalists are also engaged in the training with 68 per cent of said they have participated in the journalism training. They also have diversified the field of news reporting where female journalists are not only engaged in the reporting gender issues but are engaged in reporting different sectors.

The study also finds that nearly half of the female journalists surveyed have pointed out that they are satisfied with the jobs and can sustain their living with the salary however, other half of female journalists are dissatisfied with the wages they receive from the media houses. Majority of the journalist’s working in Kathmandu valley receive salary of above Rs. 20,000.

Although the trend towards joining the media workforce retaining human resources in this field is still a challenge, which has affected female journalists’ participation in the leadership position. One of the major reasons behind such tendency to leave the job is economic concerns. The better payments in other fields such as I/NGOs, jobs in international agencies and going abroad have is the final destination to experienced women journalists. The findings suggest that women are taken seriously, where experienced women journalists are few compared to men, which results to filling up the gap by the male rather than women in such position.

Other challenges they refer to some extent that exist in the field are character assassination, control; hate speech, sexual harassment and warning are prevalent in the newsroom. Though

³¹ Pandit interview

two-third of women journalists feel working environment has improved with respect to news organizations are being gender friendly and states that it is fun to work in the newsroom, they still lack facilities and support that needs to be provided by the newsroom. The study finds that they don't have safety equipment's, transport for news reporting and late shift, child-care facilities, and even separate toilet for men and women.

The study raises question with respect to capacity building approach in Nepal. Despite journalists have received certain level of trainings but they still demand similar type of training. For instance, 42 per cent of female journalists have participated in the investigative journalism training but still at large 89 per cent of female journalists demand such training. Short-term capacity building programs are one of the major reasons behind dissatisfaction towards capacity building approach in Nepal.

To address such concerns, it is required to formulate in house media policy and state policy in the written form to further improve the status of female journalists in Nepal. Such documents that address the concerns of gender equality, harassment issues, human resource, bringing in voice of women in the content delivery of news content and other concerns would bring in participation of women journalists and women empowerment as whole.

5.1. Recommendations:

In order to address the challenges faced by women journalists following recommendation have been suggested:

Representation with continuity: The number of participations of female journalists in the field is increasing but is still not in par with the male journalists. It is necessary to take an affirmative action to bring in effective gender balance in media institution. However, the gender equality should not resonate to fulfill the gender gap only in numbers but also bringing in professionalism within female journalists to participate in the senior professional level. This means the role of media institution should delve, not only at recruiting the women journalist but also develop a mechanism to continuously attract them to continue their profession to address the growing concern of retention.

Capacity building: The capacity building approach needs to be revisited. Short term training programs needs to be replaced by long term training programs to impart better practical needs. Improvement on training with respect to transferring skills on investigative journalism and keep up with technological advancement is suggested. Even in-house media training skills needs to be provided which is mostly lacking.

Policies: Policies are guiding principles for sustainable development of any of the sector, and its implementation results to achievements of such policy goals. Making news media inclusive at large and addressing gender concerns following policies could help bring better results in the future:

- Policies need to be in written form, to address the participation of women journalists to address gender equality and gender equity.
- Develop policies regarding non-discrimination; recognize special needs of women journalists with facilities and support of media institutions such as safety, transport, child-care, separate toilets etc.
- Media institution develops gender-friendly policies that deal with problem of sexual harassment cases, character assassination, hate speech and issue of gender bias.
- Policies on media house with respect to remuneration, equal payment and job security.

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Appendix 1

List of interviews

Date	Name	Position/Organization
14 th August, 2019	Amika Rajthala	President/ Working Women Journalist
16 th September, 2019	Tilak Pathak	Associate Editor/ Nagarik Daily
20 th August, 2019	Poonam Poudel	Journalist / Breaklinks.com
26 th August, 2019	Tirtha Koirala	News Chief- Thahakhabar.com
28 th August, 2019	Laxmi Basnet	Subeditor/ Himal Khabar Magazine
7 th August, 2019	Nitu Pandit	President/ Sancharika Samuha
3 rd September, 2019	Pawan Acharya	News Chief/ Kantipur FM

Participants of Focus Group Discussion conducted on 10th September 2019

Name	Position/Organization
Lekhnath Pandey	Lecturer/ Tribhuvan University
Bhadra Sharma	Reporter/ Republica Daily
Ganga BC	Province Editor/ Kantipur Daily
Shruti Shrestha	Photojournalist/ Kantipur Daily
Bikash Karki	Photojournalist/ Annapurna Post
Kamal Panthi	Vice- President/ Sancharika Samuha
Prakriti Adhikari	Senior Reporter/ Gorkhpatra Daily