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A Thesis on Women's Participation in Bangladeshi Online News Portals

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Letter of Approval

I am gladly certifying that the thesis titled ‘Women’s participation in Bangladeshi Online news portals’ conducted and prepared by MD Mehedi Hasan bearing ID: 172-28-251 of the department of Journalism and Mass Communication has been approved for presentation and viva voce. He has completed the project under my supervision during fall 2019 semester.

The thesis is an authentic work of MD Mehedi Hasan. I would like to recommend the thesis for further academic approval.

MD Mehedi Hasan bears a strong moral character and a honest personality. It was really a matter of pleasure to work with him. I wish him all success in life.



.....

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Finally, I will like to say big thank you all classmates at Daffodil International University Bangladesh for their kind cooperation and friendly attitude throughout my studies.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Mr. MD Habibur Rahaman and Mosa. Monjuyara Begum.

Abstract

Along with the massive change of the digital society, the way of sending information to the public has been changing. The communication channels have digitalized and people think that the mental condition of people has changed. Theorists and academics tells that people has been modernized and their thinking also. But if we look in the sector of Online Journalism in Bangladesh, we can see that the thinking of society, family members of women has not been changed drastically. Because the participation of women in online journalism is very low in comparison to man. At the time of survey and interview, I saw that the society holds ancient thinking on women when it comes to their participation in journalism. That's why the participation of women is very low yet. In the surveyed online portals in Bangladesh we saw that the participation of women in online journalism reporting is 24 percent, where the participation of man is 76 percent, which is less than one fourth in comparison to man. Their participation in editing section is much lower. Only five percent of women is working in editing section where 95 percent are man. When the question came to the participation in managerial and gate keeping position in online journalism, the situation is even worst. Because only 11 percent women is holding this position and 89 percent male holding the position.

Table of Contents:	Page Number
Introduction.....	1
Content and Rational of the Study.....	2
Objective of the Study.....	3
Research Question.....	3
Literature Review.....	3
Methodology of the Study.....	4
Findings of the Study.....	6
Analysis.....	13
Recommendation.....	14
Conclusion.....	14
References.....	15

List of Figures and Annexes	Page Number
Figure 1.....	6
Figure 2.....	7
Figure 3.....	8
Figure 4.....	8
Figure 5.....	9
Figure 6.....	9
Figure 7.....	10
Figure 8.....	10
Figure 9.....	11
Figure 10.....	11
Figure 11.....	12
Figure 12.....	12
Annex 1.....	16
Annex 2.....	17
Annex 3.....	18

Introduction

For a long time, women from Bangladesh were working in small business like teaching, nursing and as house maid. But with the changing of time, their choice also changing. Now they are working in the field of garments manufacturing, medical sector, judiciary, law enforcement agency, journalism, NOG's and humanitarian work. From many days they are successfully working in the field of newspaper and television industry. Some previous study also showed that their participation in reporting and news presentation in television media is noticeable. With the booming of online media in Bangladesh, their participation in journalism is also increasing. Though the society and family members of Bangladeshi women are unwilling to see them in journalism, they are trying to contribute as same as others gender. But there is a gap to understand the current situation of women in online journalism. That's why the main objective of this study was to understand the situation and participation of women in online Journalism.

Context and Rational of the study

Before this century, Bangladesh have only newspaper, radio station and satellite television channels to send information to the audience. But with the spreading of internet among the mass people the channels of news media is changing. People are watching television more in online than through satellite channels. Like this the medium of radio hearing also changed. People also hearing radio through internet. Now a day's people are reading newspapers online more than collection hard copy. But this does not happen abruptly. After the successful starting of first Bangladeshi online news portals, the others medium also started to come in this field. The journey was started in 2005. At that time Mr. Taufiq Imrose Khalidi started www.bdnews24.com as an online news media. On 23rd October 2006, the portal started to give information to the mass people without any charge. This was the starting of online journalism in Bangladesh. After that this sector boomed drastically. But Bangladeshi government don't impose any law or rules to operate the online news portals or don't started the licensing system. That's why there is no exact data to the government or to any organization about the numbers of news portals which are operating in Bangla or from Bangladesh or through Bangladeshi.

In the current situation of Bangladesh, anyone can buy a domain and start it as a news portals or information transmitting system. But the government is planning to impose new rules for operating the online news portals. The information minister recently said that they are creating new law for the online news portals. All the portals will have to operate under this rules. Who will not register under that law, won't be able to operate the portals.

Though the situation is seeming not good, this sector became very popular among the mass people. This mainly for the instant message giving opportunity, low cost and various message sending option like text message, images, audio, video and graphics. For the popularity, many portals has been created there and they also created job opportunities for the journalists. As like the men, women also working in this field. But there is not much information about the participation women is this sector. The present study has been conducted to bridge the gap in terms of following specific part of women participation in online news portals in Bangladesh.

- What is the situation of Women's participation in Bangladeshi online news portals?
- In which position are they serving the news portals?

- What is the situation of women journalist in Online portals reporting and editing?
- How many women are playing role in gate-keeping or decision making role in online news portals?
- Are they facing problems in career development when they are working for the online news portals?

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study was exploring the women's position and participation in Bangladeshi online news portals.

Research Questions

- How many women are working as journalist in Bangladeshi online news portals?
- What are their positions and influence in those portals?
- What is the role of the women journalist in reporting, editing, gate-keeping and decision making of online news portals?
- What measures can be taken to improve the participation of women in Bangladeshi news portals?
- Are women facing any discrimination when they are working in online news portals?

Literature Review of the study

In Bangladesh there are mainly six types of news media available. They are newspaper, radio, television, online news portals, online radio and online television channel. These organizations have two types of ownership. Public and private ownership. For this study, we selected private owned news portals. In this sector, a large number of women are working and contributing. If we see the internal condition, we can assume that women have been always discouraged to do journalism in Bangladesh.

But in recent days they are entering in this sector. The number is not high but increasing. According to a statistics done in 2003 showed that the participation of women in Bangladeshi print media was

six percent while another statistic of 2004 showed it sixteen percent in news reporting and editing section of the then three popular and leading satellite channels-ATN Bangla, NTV and Channel I (Nasrin: 2009, P. 35).

Safa & Akter (2015) argued that in recent times the trend among the women in Bangladesh is changing. They are involving in journalism more. Their participation in print, electronic and online journalism is rising. Over the last decades, some Bangladesh female journalist done newsworthy work. But comparing to the man the participation of female in this sector is significantly low than the expected level. Though women are entering in this sector, the higher positions are continuing reserved for the man.

Hasan (2009, p. 44) argued that only few women few women are working as reporters in Bangladeshi media organizations. Most of the women who are working as a journalist are serving as copy editors. He also stated that there is no mentionable position of women in top position of news organizations in the country.

Nasrin (2003, p. 26) stated that the main reason of this situation (less participation of women in Journalism in Bangladesh) is the legal position of female is still ruled by religious laws when it comes to legacy, marriage, divorce and child custody. Religious laws are privileged over constitutional guarantees, working against the interest of female journalist. Attitudes in society still stand against gender equality. Very often female are not aware of their rights, even when they are, female who depend on male protection are convinced that it is not in their best interests to claim those rights.

The findings from the literature review showed that women's participation in Bangladeshi news media is less comparing to the man. Also they are not serving top posts in the media organizations. The aim of this research is to finding out the current participation of women in Bangladeshi online news portals. The study also aims to understand the situation of women in gate-keeping positions in online news portals.

Methodology of the study

The aim of the study was to finding out the participation and situation of women journalist in Bangladeshi online news portals in details. The method of this study included survey/position mapping, Key Informant Interviews and literature review. The study has been conducted during

the period of October to November 2019. Data gathering, analysis and synthesis were done accordingly of the stated timeline.

Position mapping and in-depth interview has been used to conduct the study. To analyze current condition as descriptive survey attempt has been conducted.

Position mapping: Total 11 online news portals has been selected to conducted the study. There were three types of online portals. One who are running just as an online portal, seconds those who have newspaper and also a news portal in the same name and thirds the online portals who have a satellite television station in the same name of the portal.

Among the 11 portals one has satellite television station in the same name, five have newspaper as the online portal and the other six is running only as a portal. Among them two portals are running in English and the others are in Bengali.

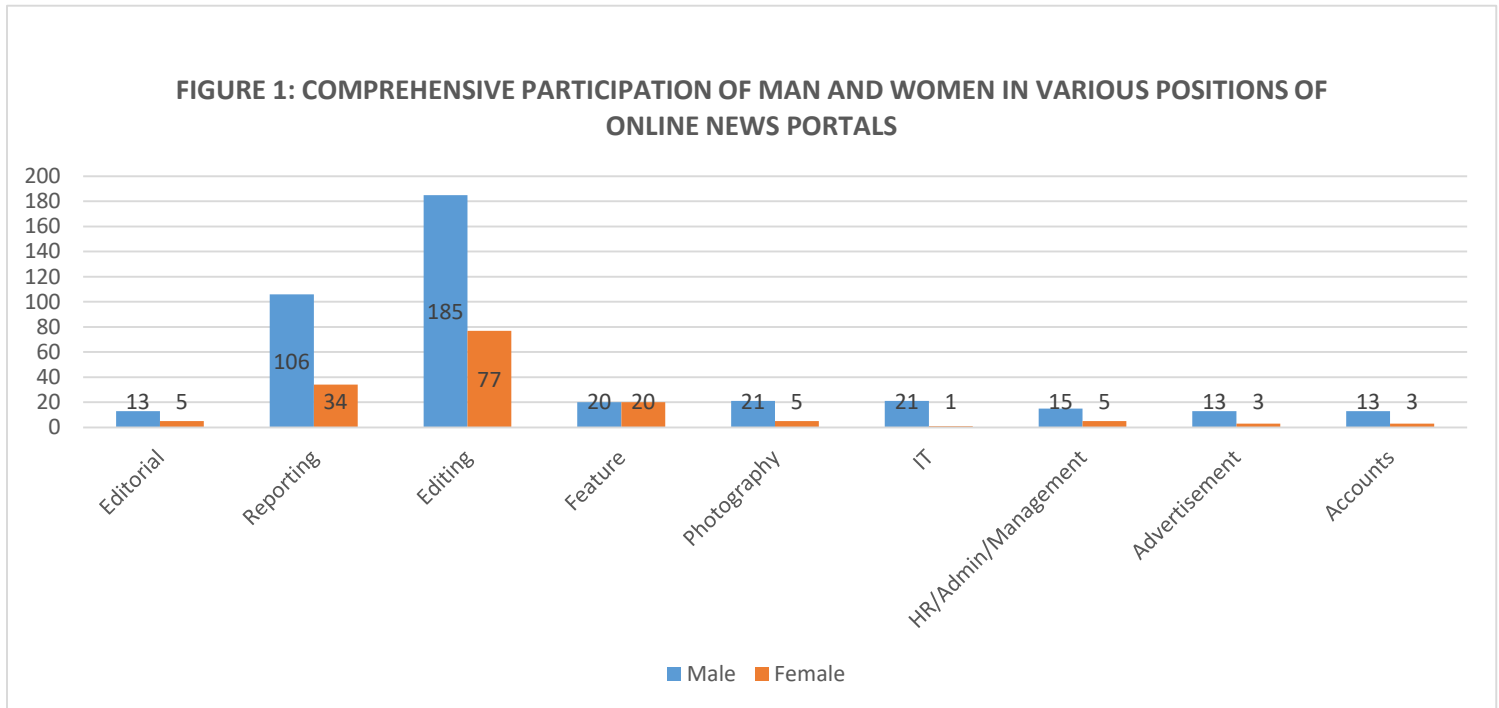
The selected portals include: www.somoynews.tv (known as Somoy TV online), www.dhakatribune.com (Known as the online version of newspaper Dhaka Tribune), www.jugantor.com (known as the online version of daily newspaper Jugantor), www.samakal.com (Known as the online version of daily newspaper Samakal), www.jagonews24.com (Branded as the online news portal Jago news), www.priyo.com (Known as online news portal), www.sarabangla.com (Known as online news portal, they also have print version), www.daily-bangladesh.com (Known as online news portal Daily Bangladesh), www.ppbd.news (Known as online news portal Purba poschim dot com), www.banglanews.com (Known as online news portal Banglanews), www.ourtime.com (Known as the online version of newspaper ourtime).

The Key Informant Interviews (KII): The interview was taken from the media academics, researcher, senior Journalists and the members of the civil society.

Literature Review: To get secondary data relevant study report, survey, media reports, research article, books etc. were gathered and reviewed to extract necessary information.

Findings of the study

Overall participation



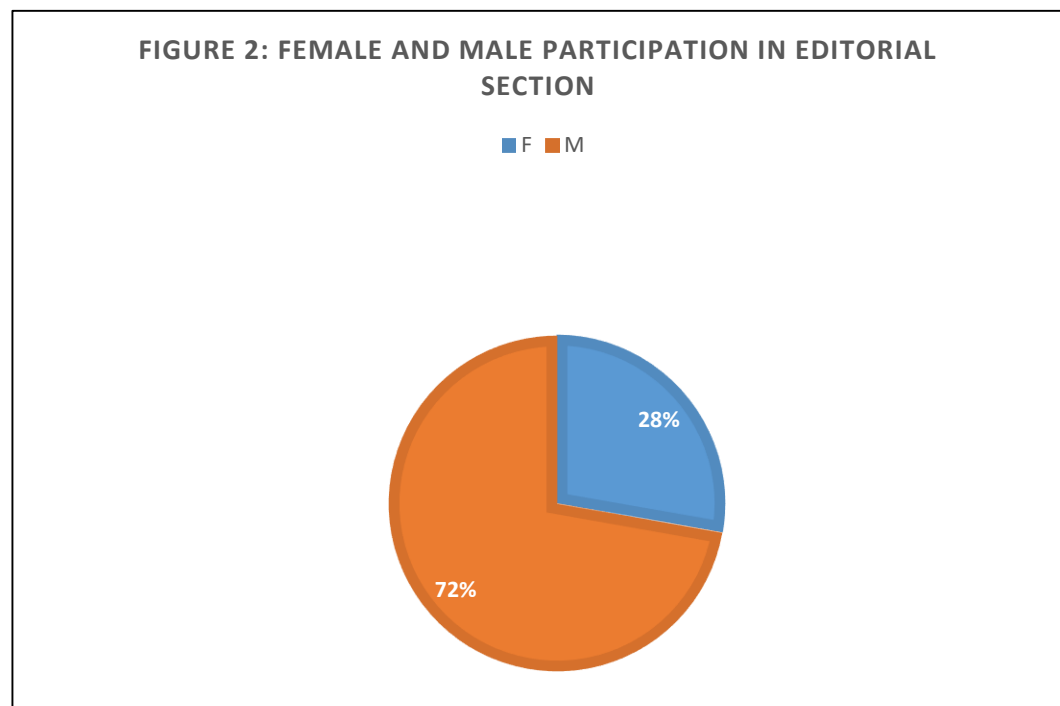
The position mapping of man and women has been collected from the selected eleven news portals in nine specific sections and these are Editorial, Reporting, Editing, Feature, Photography, IT, HR/Admin/Management, Advertisement and Accounts. The collected data showed that 153 women is working in the selected news portals, where 407 man are working in those portals. Among them 5 women are working in editorial section where 13 men are working in the same position. 106 man are working as reporter in those portals where the numbers of women is only 34 in the same position. In editing section 185 male is working and the number of female in the same position is 77. In the feature section the participation of male and female is same. 20 male and same number of female is working in this position. But when photography section came the number changed drastically. 21 man is working as photographer, where the only five women is working in the same department. The situation is worst in IT department. 21 man is serving for this position, where only one women is serving in the position. In human resources, administration and management department also dominated by man. Five women is working in these position

against 15 men. In advertisement and Accounts department, the participation is same for the women. In both section three women is working against 13 men.

After this findings, interview has been taken from the people who has been identified as the key informant interviewers (KI) previously. After taking the interview, it has been seen that the participation women is increasing day by day in Bangladeshi online journalism. Mainly they are willing to work in the desk job. They have more participation in feature section because in this section the shift is relaxed and they can come in the office in their suitable time and there is also some section which mainly for women and should be done by the women. On the other hand, the worst situation is in the photography section. Most women are unwilling to work in this sector because if they work as photographer they will have to go in every part of the city. The duty roster is also hard for the photographer. Without this, from their childhood, they were discouraged to do such type of work.

Editorial section

The study shows that the female are only one third in the editorial section of the surveyed news portals. The in-depth-interview shows that the women are still in backward position in journalism. There are some reasons behind this: less support from the families, workplace and the society. Still, many people think journalism as a profession suitable for the male.

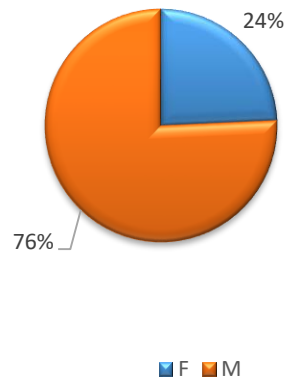


Reporting section

The study shows that less than one-fourth women work as a reporter in online portals. Reporters don't have a fixed time limit. Sometimes they need to go outside at night also. Most of the women think that it's not safe to go outside at night alone. For this, most women from this field don't want

to work as a reporter. On the other hand, they also get less family support to in this post. Most people believe that this post is only for women.

FIGURE 3: FEMALE AND MALE PARTICIPATION IN REPORTING SECTION

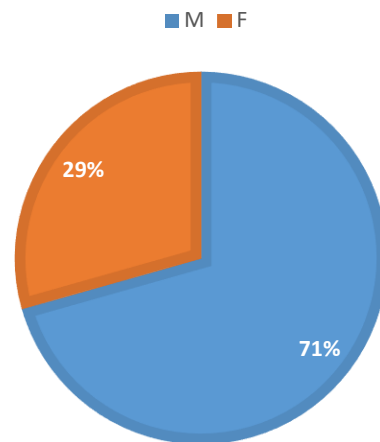


Editing section

The figure shows that 71 percent man and 29 percent women work in editing section of online news portals. Less than one fifth women work as copy editor in online news portals. The main reason behind this is mainly the unwillingness of women to work in the field of Journalism. The shifting

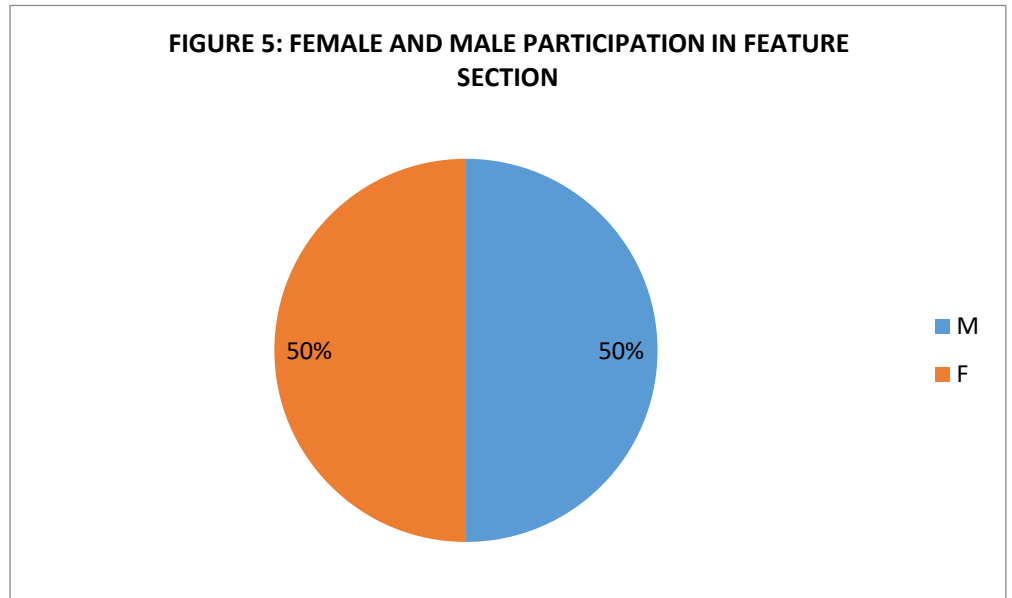
duty is also a reason behind this. On the other hand, social outlook, less family support also responsible for this.

FIGURE 4: FEMALE AND MALE PARTICIPATION IN EDITING SECTION



Feature section

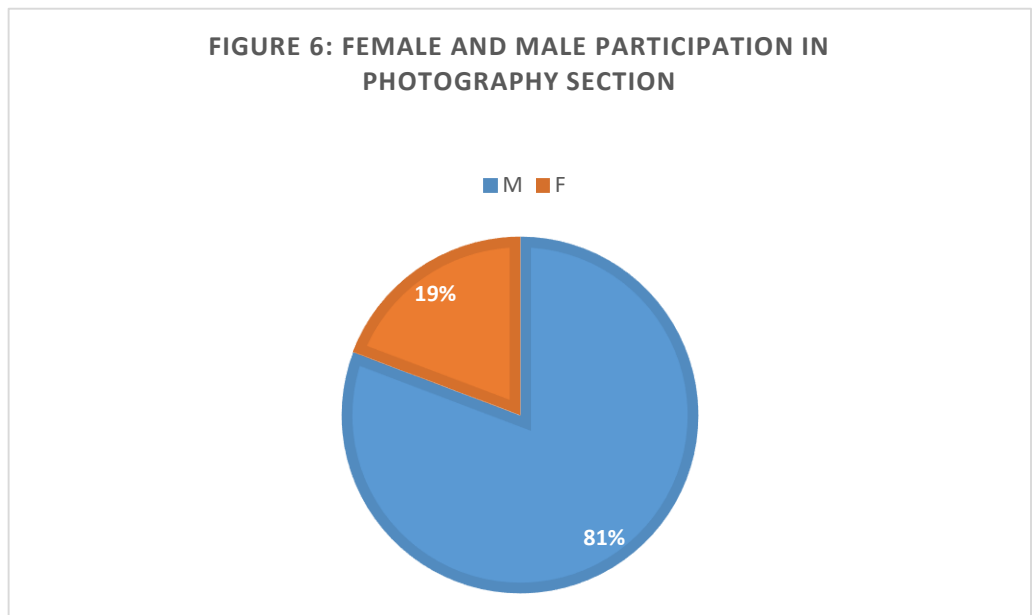
The study shows that women have similar participation along men in feature section. The proportion is equal and man and woman's percentage is same in this section. Woman's have more participation in this section than any other department of online



portals. Main reason behind this is that, most of the online portals give special attention in some category of writings which are more related to women's life, like lifestyle, cooking and women empowerment section. Most of the women also have interest to work in this section.

Photography

This study shows that women have less participation in the field of photography of online news portals. Only 19 percent of women are working as photographer for online news portals, where man's participation is 81 percent. Women's have less participation because

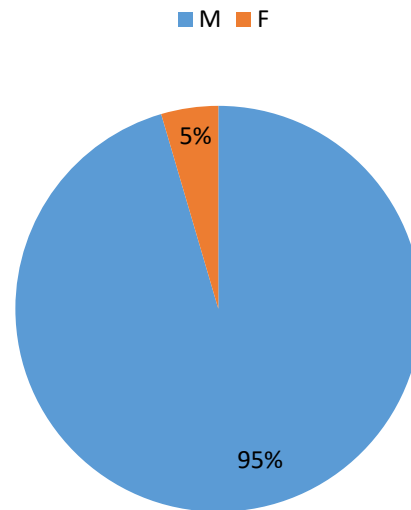


it is outdoor work. On the other hand, they also get less family support to in this post. Most people believe that this post is only for women.

IT

This study shows that the participation of man vs women in online news portals is very high. The proportion is 95:5. 21 men is working as IT specialist in 11 news portals where only one woman is working in this post. The person who is working as IT specialist in online news portals

FIGURE 7: FEMALE AND MALE PARTICIPATION IN IT SECTION

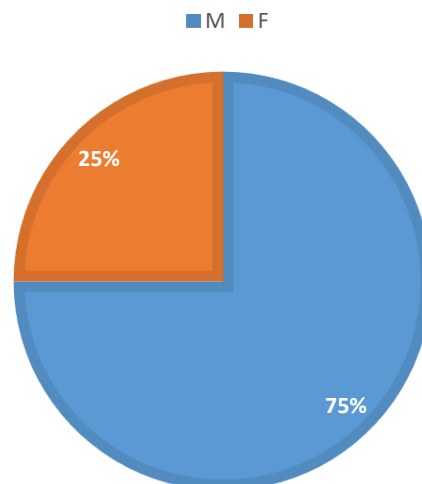


needs to monitor the website all time. If its hacked at midnight, they need to start working at that time. This is the main reason behind this situation. Because it's not 9am-5pm job.

HR and Admin

This study shows that one fourth of woman works in this department. The participation of women is not satisfactory. Most of the woman doesn't want to work in this field because of risk, uncertainty and job security.

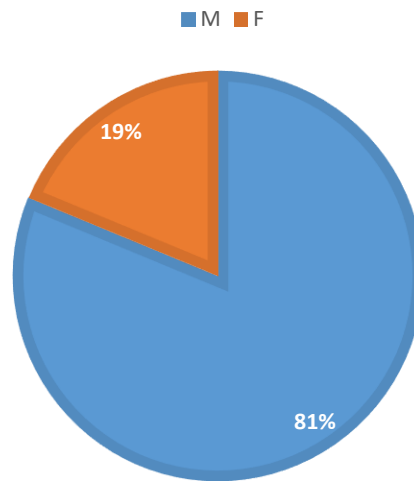
FIGURE 8: FEMALE AND MALE PARTICIPATION IN HR AND ADMIN



Advertisement

Study shows that one fifth of women are working as an advertiser in online news portals. Main reason of this high difference is that many women do not want to work in this post because these pupils needs to work outdoor.

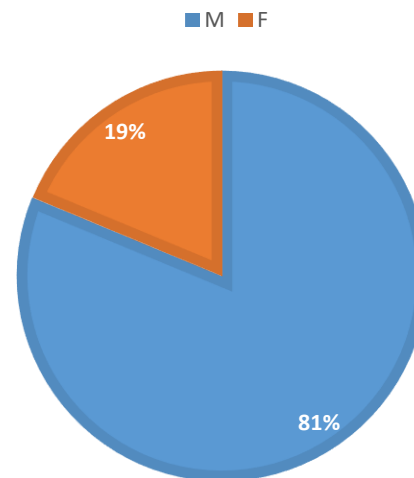
FIGURE 9: FEMALE AND MALE PARTICIPATION IN ADVERTISEMENT



Accounts

Less than one fifth of women are working in this post in online news portals. Main reason behind this is that, many women do not feel interested to work in there because of less work security and less salary.

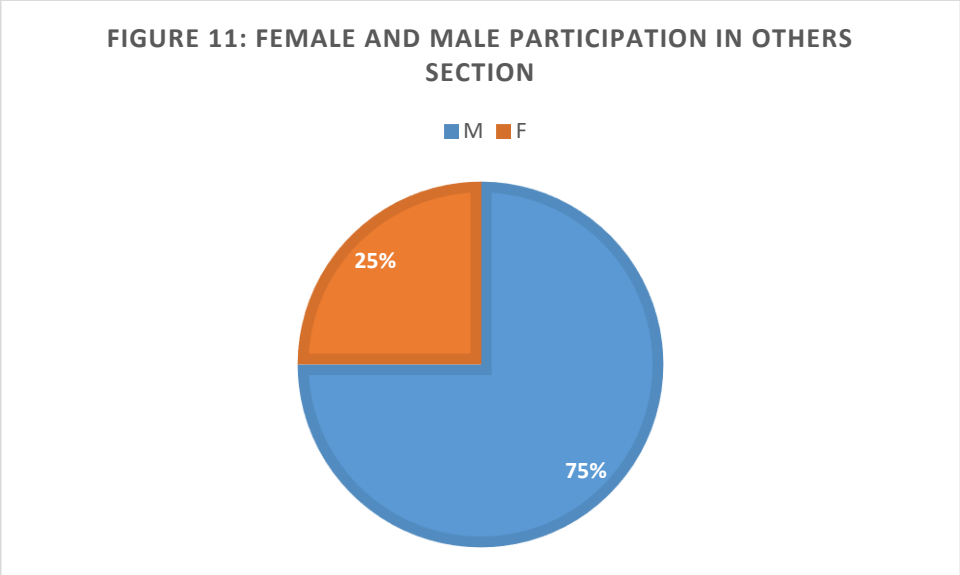
FIGURE 10: FEMALE AND MALE PARTICIPATION IN ADVERTISEMENT



Others

Without the above ten section, there are some other field in online news portals. But this post also filled with man. 25 percent of women are working in those posts where 75 percent are male.

Unwillingness of women and family restriction are main reason for less participation in the field of online news portals.



Women as News managers and gate keepers

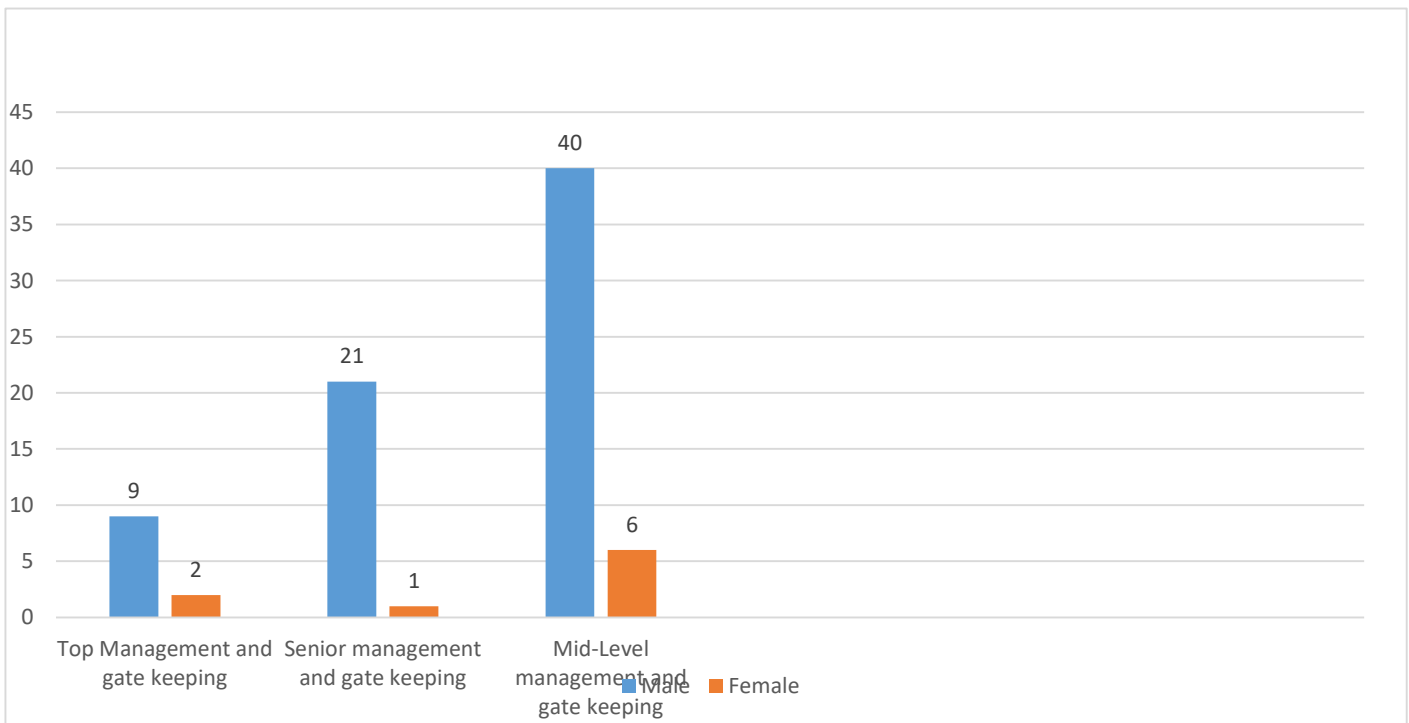


Figure 12: Distribution of numbers of male and female journalists in various gate-keeping positions

The data compares the participation of male and female as the news managers and gate keepers in online news media in Bangladesh. It is a fact that the managers and gate keepers plays a important role in news media. Mainly they are work as the decision maker in this sector. The select which content will be published and which not.

In this study Publisher, Chief Executive, Operating Officer, Editor, Editor in Chief and the post of managing editor considered as the top management and gate keeping position. The posts of Executive editor, Joint Editor and Chief News Editor considered as the senior management and gate keeping and the posts of News editor, special correspondent and Chief reporter considered as the Mid-Level management and gate keeping.

The study showed that the situation of women in these position is very low. Mainly men are holding in these position. The figure showed that two women is serving in the top management where the nine position is holding by men, 21 man is serving in the senior management level where one women is serving in the same position. In Mid-level management 40 male are serving and the numbers of women is only six.

The KI said that in Bangladesh most of the time the publisher is also hold the post of editor in media organization. Mainly the businessmen dominating this sector. Most of the big businessmen in Bangladesh are male, so when they open a news media they hold the top position. For this reason, the Top management of news portals in Bangladesh are male dominating. Some positions are holding by women but in most cases it has been seen that these women are relatives of the businessmen who opened the media house. Mainly the experienced people holds the senior and Mid-Level management position. Previous study showed that women's participation was were low in past. Mainly men work as journalist. So, when this question is about holding these position it's also considered that more man has more experience than most of the women. On the other hand this is also considered that these positions needs to take pressure all the time. Pressure from the government officials, pressure from the law enforcement and detective agencies and from the publisher. So, man will be able to handle these situations. They also stated that female's participation will increase in these posts with the time.

Analysis on the basis of theoretical underpinning

The findings of the study showed that women are much more behind than men in the field of Bangladeshi online journalism. Though they have similar participation in feature section they are not participating as expected in reporting and copy editing. And when it comes to managerial and gate-keeping positions, they are much more lagged.

This is because of societal and family views about women, sexist structure, male dominated society and the less participation of women in online journalism in past.

Recommendation

In order to overcome the challenges, some steps should be taken. Some steps should be taken by the government and some should be taken by the employer and by the women who are currently working in this profession. Some commendations for the positive change of women's participation in online news portals in Bangladesh has been given below.

Equal opportunity: The female journalists should get equal opportunity as their male colleagues. They should be engaged in the supervisory position in the media organizations.

Skill development: Necessary steps should be taken to develop the skills of women. The government can take some steps to make this happen. Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) can take some steps in this sector.

Human resource policy: Developing a comprehensive guideline for recruiting human resource in online news media. The facilities should be given based on the employee's skill and merit.

Conclusion

The study findings showed that women are joining in journalism more than before. With the increasing number of online news portals, women are more likely to become journalist. They are choosing this as their profession now. But the situation didn't change totally. Women journalists are still facing problems and challenges when enter in this profession. It is also assumed that sometimes women journalists are getting less facilities than their male colleagues.

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Safa, N. & Akter, T. (2015). Challenges of Female Journalists in Bangladesh. *Humanities and social sciences*. Vol. 3, No. 5, 2015, pp.207-214. Doi: 10.11648/j.hss.20150305.17.

Nasrin, G. A. (2009). *'Why are the women journalists still a rare species?'* In *'Women in Bangladesh Journalism*. Dhaka: BCDJC, p.35.

Annex-01: Position mapping table to analyze the participation analysis of women in Bangladeshi Online News portals

Name of the Online News Portal.....

Name of the department	Number of Male staff	Number of Female staff	Remarks
Editorial			
Reporting			
Editing (Sub-Editors, copy editors, output editors, video editors)			
Features			
Photography/Videography			
Computer/IT			
HR/Administration/Management			
Circulation			
Accounts			
Advertisement			
Others			
Total			

Name of the Positions	Number of Male Staff	Number of Female staff
Publisher/Chief Executive/Operating Officer		
Editor/ Editor in Chief/ Managing Editor		
Executive Editor? Joint Editor		
Chief News Editor		
News Editor		
Assignment Editor		
Chief Reporter		
Any other senior position		

Data collectors name.....

Date:

Annex 02: Selected media to analyze the participation analysis of women in Bangladeshi Online News portals

NO	Web address of the portal
1	www.dhakatribune.com
2	www.jugantor.com
3	www.samakal.com
4	www.jagonews.com
5	www.priyo.com
6	www.sarabangla.com
7	www.daily-bangladesh.com
8	www.ppbd.com
9	www.banglanews24.com
10	www.ourtime.com
11	www.somoynews.tv

Annex 03: List of the Key Informant Interviewers to analyze the participation analysis of women in Bangladeshi Online News portals

NO	Name	Designation	Organisation
1	Ahmed Jobaer	Managing Director	Somoy Media Limited
2	Omor Faruk	Chief Reporter	Somoy Media Limited
3	Mizanur Rahaman Sohel	Incharge	www.jugantor.com
4	Tanzil Remon	Incharge	www.priyo.com
5	Shotorupa Datta	Deputy Incharge	www.somoynews.tv
6	Fahmida Urni	Senior Sub Editor	www.dhakatribune.com
7	Ayesha Siddiqua	Sub Editor	www.sarabangla.com
8	Pradip Kumar Pandey	Professor	Rajshahi University
9	Dr. Sumon Rahaman	Professor	University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
10	Elina Khan	Women Rights Activist	Bangladesh Human Rights Foundation