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Assessment Report

The status of Women journalists at Jordan's media institutions

Jordan



**The status of women journalists at
Jordan's media institutions**
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1. Executive summary

The challenges that women face in all fields of work have generally limited their economic participation – which stood at 16.3% of the total number of Jordanians in the labor market, incurring an annual loss of JD11 billion, estimated by Jordan Strategy Forum.

The media is considered a reliable engine of change that helps increase women's participation in economic activities. However, the sector itself suffers from the low representation of women in its workforce – whether in percentage or their presence in leadership positions – even more severely than in other industries. Media outlets' progress over the past decades in terms of diversity, expansion and professionalism have not been coupled with the integration of women in their structures. On the contrary, the media environment has been a repellent and unfriendly environment for women. This is manifested in the fact that media has been a male-dominated arena for year, with men constituting 77% of workers in the industry and dominating almost all leadership positions.

This study aimed to identify the circumstances in which women journalists work in Jordan's media: print, online, TV and radio, focusing specifically on violations of their rights in the workplace through gender-based discrimination in terms of opportunities, job benefits, rewarding their performance financially and morally, and the harassment they might face from sources during work outside the office and while commuting to or from work. The study also surveyed how much women trust that filing complaints about harassment or gender-based discrimination will hold perpetrators accountable. It also examined women journalists' self-evaluation of how gender impacts their career development and how satisfied they are with their job as journalists.

The study concluded that women have faced and are still facing hindrances driven by gender-based discrimination that have limited their number, dimmed their role as journalists and restricted their prospects of professional development. The percentage of women at media organisations is less than 23%, while they almost have no presence in leadership positions, which are dominated by men.

The key obstacles they face are:

- Media outlets do not cater for their needs as working women. They impose working-hour regimes and assignments that are not suitable for their social circumstances, and decline to install and nurseries for their children. 40% of respondents said their organizations did not support them to handle situations within their families and communities that restrict and obstruct their work as journalists.
- Discrimination against women at work in terms of opportunities, job benefits and rewarding performance financially and morally. 90% of respondents said that this discrimination obstructs the progress of women journalists' careers and leads to an overwhelming frustration with their situation as working women.
- Discrimination against women by sources such as politicians and government officials, which creates an unfair professional rivalry between male and female journalists in pursuit of information.
- Rising rates of sexual harassment targeting women journalists verbally and physically, by male co-workers and bosses, during their field work or from sources. 45% of respondents said harassment has rendered the working environment threatening for women journalists, to the point where they might quit.
- Absence of clear-cut, deterrent laws and regulations that protect women journalists from discrimination and harassment, safeguard their rights and ensure them justice by holding perpetrators to account.

The following recommendations were presented at the end of the study:

- Amending the legislation that affects women journalists, including the Labour Law, to become more considerate of women’s needs in the workplace, and amending the Penal Code to include specific provisions on sexual harassment that stipulate penalties on perpetrators.
- Adopting institutionalised regulations that prohibit gender-based discrimination against female employees at media outlets, with rules and mechanisms to protect women journalists from harassment and punish perpetrators.
- Encouraging media outlets to adopt positive discrimination towards women employees through allocating quotas for them in the team and leadership posts.
- Enhancing the role of women journalists at the Jordan Press Association and amending the syndicate’s regulations to include mechanisms that bolster this role in the media and protect their rights in the workplace.

2. Legislative, economic, political and professional environment

2.1. Legislation

Jordanian legislation includes discriminatory provisions that fail to safeguard women and their social and economic rights, which reflects on their performance in the labour market and their economic participation, and eventually harms the national economy.

Foremost of these laws is Jordan’s Penal Code No. 16 from 1960, which was amended for the 27th time in 2017 to toughen penalties on perpetrators of sexual harassment. However, the new version does not explicitly mention sexual harassment, to the disappointment of civil society institutions including the Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SIGI).

SIGI welcomed the changes made to the law, but deemed them insufficient and called for “criminalising sexual harassment explicitly in the Penal Code,” if not in a separate law enacted for this purpose. It stressed that the “majority of the Penal Code provisions are not sufficient to criminalise sexual harassment as an indecent act”.

In a factsheet released after the amendments went into effect in 2017, SIGI defined sexual harassment as “unwelcome sexual advances and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that take various forms and means depending on the place where they are conducted and the power enjoyed by the harasser”.

SIGI’s factsheet referred to a survey conducted at the Hashemite University showing that 14% of women had been sexually harassed in the workplace to indicate “epidemic sexual harassment,” concluding that “it has become imperative to issue legislation specifically concerned with sexual harassment”.

The said amendments adhered to the traditional legal adaptation of sexual harassment, which is categorised under crimes against “public morality and decency”, “attack on honour” and “indecent acts”, mostly concentrated in Articles 305, 306 and 320 of the original code. The amendments came as follows:

Article 305: The first paragraph of the original article read: A prison sentence for a period of one month to two years shall be imposed upon any person who engages in an indecent manner with: 1. Another person, male or female, under eighteen years of age; or, 2. A woman or a girl, who has reached 18 years of age, but without their consent. Paragraph 2 stipulates that it is not permissible to replace the jail sentence with a fine in case the act is repeated. The amendment imposed a minimum of one year's jail time for the perpetrator, while the victim in Article 305-2 is defined as "whether a man or a woman," instead of just "a woman or a girl".

Article 306 originally stipulates that whoever proposes an immoral act or directs immoral words to a male or a female less than eighteen years of age shall be punished by a period not to exceed six months or a fine between JD30-200. The provision was replaced in the 2017 amendments by stipulating a jail sentence of a period not to exceed six months for whoever proposes an immoral act or directs immoral conduct, in words, action, gesture, or move, explicitly or implicitly, to 1- a person who is less than eighteen years old 2- a person, be it a man or a woman, who has completed eighteen years of age, without their consent. The amendments stress that it is not permissible to replace jail time with a fine in case of repeating the crimes mentioned in the amended version.

There is also the Civil Pension Law for the year 1959, which stipulates dispensing to a female employee who receives more than one pension salary the one that is higher in value and cancelling the other, although it is her right. The same code stipulates that a mother has no right to receive the pension allowance of her deceased son unless she was widowed or divorced. It also suspends payments for the wives, daughters and mothers of deceased insured employees if they get married, and the payment is resumed when they get divorced or widowed after that. If they re-marry, the salary will be suspended indefinitely.

As regards the Social Security Law for the year 2014, the widower cannot be apportioned his deceased wife's retirement salary unless he has a disability or has no income of his own, which violates the right of female employees, who pay their contributions all the years of their employment, to pass on their retirement salaries to their husbands regardless of their health or financial conditions. Also, the mother of the deceased insured person will have her share suspended if she marries someone other than the father, which entails a punishment for the mother for re-marrying; after all, she will always be the mother with or without marriage.

For its part, the Labour Law makes it mandatory for employers who hire more than 20 married women to designate a nursery within the premises of the workplace, although there are divorced and widowed women who have children, not to mention men who have their children in their custody and, accordingly, have the right to be included in the law.

While the "flexible working hours bylaw for the year 2017" serves working women substantially and is considered an achievement for women, the system has a flaw as it conditions the effecting of these provisions to the consent of the employer, who is often a man. The system allows women to work part-time or within flexible working hours in a convenient manner for her without her rights under the Labour Law being compromised.

The Personal Status Law, in the provisions that govern the Obligatory Will, limits the right to inheritance to the children of the deceased son in the event of the death of the grandfather, while the offspring of the deceased daughter are deprived from this right, a situation that needs to be rectified, according to rights advocacy groups, to be equal with their cousins.

Meanwhile, the health insurance bylaw applied by the Jordan Press Association No. 95 for the year 1995 entails injustice for female JPA members, as the wife and children of the male member can be insured, while the husband and family of female member cannot.

Women's achievements, especially legislative ones realized in 2017, have improved the pro-women's rights discourse, yet this discourse has not reflected on her presence and actual participation on the ground at the society, public life and state levels, which remains very low. This is evident in the gender gap index issued annually by the World Economic Forum measuring the gap between men and women in 144 countries in the world, targeting four main aspects: health, education, economic participation and opportunities and political empowerment.

The WEF Index shows that in 2017, Jordan ranked 135 out of 144, recording 0.6 out of 1 (The index measures 1-0, with 1 referring to full equality and lack of gender gap, while 0 means no equality and a wide gender gap).

2.2. Women's participation in economy

The number of females stood at 4.7 million out of the total population in Jordan in 2017, constituting 47.1%. Economic indicators in the previous 10 years (2007-2016) indicated a downward rate of women's economic participation during this period. In 2016, the rate stood at 13.4%, whereas it was 14.7% in 2007.

The unemployment rate among women remained high at 31.2% in 2017, up from 25.6% in 2007. The rates are much higher than those of male unemployment, which was 14.7% in 2017 and 10.3% in 2007.

The wage gap is also in favour of men, whose average monthly wage is JD507, while that of women is JD458, with a JD49 difference, according to the Department of Statistics 2016. The average salaries registered with SSC are JD512 for men and JD442 for women, with a JD70 difference. Women's low economic participation cost the Jordanian economy a loss of JD11 billion in 2016.

2.3. Women and education

Regarding education, a major indicator of equality between men and women, the illiteracy rate among females above 15 years old was 6.9%, compared to 3% among males in 2016.

As for higher education, the rate of female students' enrolment in Jordanian universities was 51.6%, compared with 48.4% for males in 2016, with a tendency among women to join humanities faculties (53.4%) while 46.6% of them study at scientific faculties. The ratio of higher education female graduates was 55%, compared with 45% for males in the same year.

The ratio of women among faculty members at Jordanian universities is 25% in 2016. This rate decreases the higher the academic rank is, as 59.4 of female faculty members are assistant professors, while only 7.3% are full professors.

2.4. Administration and political empowerment

Women making it to top leadership positions in public life and CSOs is a key aspect of gender equality. Regarding participation in public life, 2015 data indicates that the percentage of women members in professional associations was 34.5%, while their membership in the professional association councils was only 8%. The rate of women's membership in trade unions was 21% in the same year.

With regards to political participation and empowerment, the first woman ambassador was appointed in 1969, while women achieved the right to vote and candidacy in 1974. The first woman minister was appointed in 1979 and the first woman won a Lower House seat in 1993. Jordan's first woman judge was appointed in 1996.

Henceforth, women started to take over positions in the decision-making circles, although the rate of women's participation remains below target and occasionally associated with temporary measures like positive discrimination (women's quotas). In 2016, the percentage of women in the Lower House was 15.4%, 6.6% in the Cabinet, 18.5% in the judiciary, and 36.5% in political parties, 8% in professional associations' councils. The percentage of women in municipal councils was 41% in 2017 and 13.8% in Governorate Councils. 21% of trade unions, 19.9% of diplomatic missions, 10.9% of ambassadors, 7.9% of chambers of industry, and 0.6% of chambers of commerce were women.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union's figures on women's participation in national parliaments for 2016, Jordan ranked 141st out of 193 countries.

2.5. The media situation in Jordan

JPA president Rakan Saaideh says that the media in Jordan is “undergoing a serious crisis that varies according to the nature of the various media outlets, the state-run and private. Such a crisis is complicated and related to two contexts, the first of which is the devastating economic crisis facing the majority of newspapers, which find difficulty in paying salaries and providing operational costs and the necessary infrastructure”. The other context is the “problem of administrations’ failure to manage crises”.

Nevertheless, and despite Jordan’s drop to the 138th rank on the freedom of the press index issued by Reporters without Borders in 2017, down by three places compared to the year before, the Kingdom still has a relatively large number of media outlets. According to Jordan’s Media Commission in September 2018, there are 38 licensed satellite channels, 18 of those channels are owned by Jordanians and target Jordanian audience. All are privately owned except Kingdom TV and one launched by the Public Security Department. 30 of the channels are owned by Arab nations..

There are 39 licensed radio stations, 20 of which are state-owned: 6 of them owned by public universities (Yarmouk, Sawt Al-Janoub, University of Jordan, Sawt Al-Karak, Aal Al-Bayt University, Tafileh University), 3 owned by the Army Forces, 3 owned by municipalities of Amman, Zarqa and Aqaba, and one owned by each of the Security Directorate, Islamic Awqaf ministry, the Jordanian Hashimite Fund for Human Development (JOHD) and Arabic Language Institute.

Among 23 non-governmental radios, 9 are owned by 4 companies, and each of the rest are owned by one company.

There are 30 licensed print publications (10 dailies, 16 weeklies, 3 monthly and one annual), of which the government owns stakes in three: Al-Rai and Addustour dailies and the weekly Sahafat Al-Yarmouk, issued by Yarmouk University in Irbid. The rest are privately owned. There are also 178 licensed news websites, all privately owned.

3. Research methodology

To achieve its objectives, the study relied on four main research methodologies:

First: Information gathering, which included a survey of all legislation relevant to women journalists, data about the targeted media outlets’ numbers of female employees, the rules affecting their jobs, and the numbers of female students at journalism schools and members of the JPA. The study also shed light on women’s roles in society and government and their engagement in economy, politics, CSOs, education and media. It also examined existing literature related to women in the press.

Second: A questionnaire that targeted 53 women journalists or interns at Jordanian media outlets to examine their work circumstances from a gender perspective. This group of respondents represents the total number of women journalists as explained below under the section title study population.

Third: Conducting 10 interviews with chief editors or managers of media institutions, along with experts in media and gender.

Fourth: A panel discussion including several leaders of the targeted media outlets, along with female researchers and decision makers in the government and Lower House, aimed at adding research outcomes and recommendations to the study.

The study also adopted UNESCO’S Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM) as guidelines, specifically Category A: Actions to Foster Gender Equality within Media Organizations.

Study Population

The study targeted 23 Jordanian media organisations, including:

Newspapers (5): Al-Rai, Addustour, Al-Ghad, Assabeel, Al-Anbat, and Petra news agency.

TV channels (2): Jordan TV and Ro'ya

Radio stations (9): Jordan Radio, Hayat FM, Radio Al-Balad, Sawt Al-Karak, Sawt Al-Janoub, Saet Al-Zarqa, JBC, Farah Al-Nas and Hosna.

News websites (7): Ammon, Hala, Khaberni, Sawaleef, Amman Net and 7iber

A questionnaire was distributed to 43 journalists from these outlets, along with 12 recent female graduates of journalism schools, independent and retired journalists. Interviews were conducted with eight chief editors and managers of the participating media organisations, while 10 leaders from these outlets took part in a panel discussion.

Two women MPs, one female government official and three female academics took part either in the interviews or the discussion.

4. Women's presence in media organisations and decision-making posts

It is estimated that women constitute a quarter of the media sector in Jordan. Yet only a few news websites and one satellite channel are owned by women. No women occupy top positions in any daily newspapers except Al-Ghad newspaper, where Jumana Ghneimat was the editor-in-chief for more than 6 years before she became a minister for Media Affairs in 2018. Other women have assumed middle and high-ranking jobs at some radio and TV stations.

Jordan has an estimated 1,873 journalists, including 444 females, about 23% of the press community. There are 1,220 JPA members, including 260 female members (21% of the total), according to the syndicate's figures for 2017. There are 643 non-JPA members, including 184 women, constituting 28%, according to the Centre for Defending the Freedom of Journalists in 2015. These figures and percentages demonstrate the small size of women's presence as generators of media content, whether as reporters, presenters, script writers, guests of talk shows, or sources of information in the news.

Women journalists also have minimal presence at leading positions and, consequently, minimal influence in the decision-making process, especially with regards to content.

The following cases demonstrate women's lack of influence in the media sector:

– The Jordan News Agency, Petra

54 women work for Petra, constituting 18% of 304 employees serving in the agency. 40 of these women are journalists, comprising 16% of the total employees, compared with 206 male journalists. Seven of these women occupy leadership positions, or 17%, compared to 35 men. One woman is assistant director-general for administrative and technical affairs, two are advisers to the director, two are heads of section and another two are editorial secretaries. There are no women on the board. There are 36 women working as editors, reporters or photographers, constituting 22%, compared to 125 men in

this category. Out of these 36 journalists, 6 work in specialised media sub-sectors, 6 in the news, 11 as editors, 3 in online journalism and 2 as photojournalists.

Meanwhile, 14 women serve in administrative departments, or 18%, compared to 64 men. In the engineering section, there are two women and three men, and technician jobs in the online media department are split between men and women (9-9). Two women serve in the financial department, one as a computer programmer, another as a graphic designer, and six women are in the institutional development department.

– Al-Rai newspaper

There are 187 employees in the daily's editorial sections, including 44 women and 143 men. There are 9 board members, all men.

There are 18 women in leadership posts at Al-Rai, or 24%, compared with 57 men.

There are 8 female managing editors versus 29 men with the same title, and 10 female editorial secretaries, compared with 28 men in the same position.

Women journalists are distributed across the paper's sub-sectors as follows: 17 reporters, or 41% of total reporters, alongside 24 men; 8 female editors compared with 12 males; and one layout artist compared with 9 men in the same job.

– Addustour

There are 26 women journalists working for the daily, out of the 124 total JPA members working there. 9 journalists serve on the board, all men.

There are 13 women in leading positions, including 4 deputy managing editors, 4 managing editors, 2 heads of section and 3 editorial secretaries.

– Al-Ghad

There are 93 JPA members at the daily, including 30 women, constituting 32% of the total. Six women occupy leadership posts, including 4 editors in four departments, 1 head of section and 1 editorial secretary.

– Assabeel

Until mid of 2018 the paper had 25 journalists, only four of whom are women, making up 16%. However, the four women journalists lost their jobs as the institution was reorganised over financial problems.

There are no women on the board, nor are there female managing editors or heads of section. WWW

– Al-Anbat

The paper has 25 journalists, only 6 of whom are women, comprising 24%.

– JBC Radio

The station is run by a woman, Shaima Al-Basha, and staffed with 19 journalists and administrators, including 7 women, constituting 37%. Among these are two female presenters, while the script writing is done by a team of 8, mostly women.

– Yarmouk Radio

The station relies on volunteers as it is an experimental radio for field practice designed for students in media courses. More than 70% of student presenters and script writers are women volunteers.

The station's manager, according to its mandate, should be the deputy dean of the school of journalism, the dean himself, or any person (usually a man) whom he assigns. There are only two university officials serving as staff members, the programme supervisor and the engineering and technical supervisor. Both are currently men.

– Jordan TV

There are 107 journalists working for Jordan TV, including 12 women, according to JPA membership data. In the Jordan TV and Radio Corporation, there are 1,248 employees, including 400 women, or 32% of the total. All of these are appointed in accordance with the corporation's personnel system and the Civil Service Bylaw.

– News websites and weeklies

There are 172 licensed news website in Jordan, along with 30 weeklies. In some websites like Khaberni, there are no women employees, while Ammon has hired one. The average number of women journalists at weeklies is half the number of men.

Meanwhile, we find women journalists at Petra having titles that sound top-ranking in the administrative structure, yet women often remain outside the decision-making circle in reality, with limited influence on the media content.

For example, the title “assistant director general for administrative, financial and technical affairs” is associated with limited power. The job of the two advisers to the director is to provide non-binding consultations that may or may not be heeded.

The head of section title, which is held by two women at Petra, limits their decision within a scope decided by the chief editor and the higher editorial management.

The editorial secretary's job, as is widely known, is to handle administrative coordination between reporters, editors, heads of section and editorial management. They have no major role in influencing the media content itself.

As for reporters and editors, their jobs are often field work and executive, and so their scope of work follows the policies decided by the administration and the higher editorial management.

At Al-Rai newspaper, there is a relatively high number of women who hold the title “managing editor,” but according to the responses of respondents to the questionnaire, such a title is often an honorary one as journalists are promoted to the position without enjoying any powers. Its actual effect on the media content and planning is weak. A journalist at the paper who holds the title says her position is “more honorary than executive. I supervise no other employee”.

The same applies to the title “editorial secretary,” which is of an administrative nature that rarely has to do with content. If it does, the editorial secretary has no authority to decide the guidelines and policies related to content, as this is the job of the chief editor and male-dominated higher editorial management.

At radio stations and some satellite channels, there is almost an equal number of men and women, but the majority of women serve as presenters and anchors with limited influence on programme planning and media content, with only one small margin for manoeuvre in managing the programme material.

5. Questionnaire's sample

The questionnaire's sample comprised 53 female journalists, journalism students, fresh graduates of media schools and interns, representing the female community within the media industry. They were distributed across the sub-sectors as follows: 14 in dailies and news agencies (26%); 12 in TVs (23%); 8 in radio stations (15%), 7 in news websites (13%), 2 independent journalists (4%), 7 journalism students (13%) and 3 who quit the profession (6%).

5.1. Types of coverage

One respondent (2%) was covering the services sector (health, education, water, energy). 7.5 respondents (14%) were covering human rights sector. No respondents were covering politics. Two respondents (4%) were covering the economy. Four respondents (8%) were covering culture, arts and sports sector. 10.5 respondents (20%) were covering family, women and children. 28 respondents (52.8%) said they were working or had worked in all sectors.

The concentration of female journalists in covering "all beats" (52%) represents a lack of specialisation for female journalists, and lack of training in specialised beats like politics, economics, science or others. There is a complete absence of female journalists in the politics sector, while their rates are also low in the economy, services, health and energy sectors.

The majority of female journalists are engaged in the social issues sector that covers women, family and children (20%), an interest that is expected from a female journalist as a woman, as if she lacks the ability or desire to specialise in any other media beats. Female journalists' tendency to specialise in human rights comes in the third place, which may be attributed to the interest of human rights-focused local and international civil society organisations that are promoting women's roles in various labour sectors.

The low number of female in specific or stereotypical beats can impact women's representation in media content. A report done by the Jordan Media Observatory in 2016 reveals a significant decline in women's presence in media a content generators. Women contributed only 11% of media content, the rest of it produced by men.

Dr. Rula Al-Hroub, president of the Arab Parliament Network for Equality and deputy chairperson of Josat satellite channel, sees that the low percentage of women in media organisations adversely affects media content, which is "still male-dominated to a high degree in terms of the topics tackled and the manner they are covered". She argues that women are stereotyped when it comes to beats, not only because of editorial decisions but also because beats like politics require late-hours coverage that is considered off limits to women.

She adds that there is "gender discrimination in opportunities, especially the beats open for women to cover. The majority of reporters covering the prime ministry and Royal Court are men, because it has its requirements such as contacts, staying till late hours and travel," underlining that "flexibility is not available for women to be able to travel, and so there is preference of men when reporters are assigned to cover the Royal Court and the prime ministry, while women are preferred as reporters covering social issues."

Eman Al-Okour of the Labour Ministry says that coverage of women issues has become stereotypically "exclusive for women as men have not yet felt there is a genuine problem related to women issues".

Assabeel's chief editor, Atef Al-Joulani, says that low representation of women in media institutions does not affect the content and story processing, nor is there a link between women's representation in media and women's position in society in general.

“Women are stereotyped when it comes to beats, not only because of editorial decisions but also because beats like politics require late-hours coverage and personal relationships, that is considered off limits to women.”

He confirms that the “prime ministry and Royal Court beats go to male reporters, as there is the problem of evening meetings and the conditions of women prevent them from covering late evening news.”

Petra’s director general, Faisal Shboul, says: “When at work, women are better attached to their profession, but the social reality is harsher than it is for men, who can spend longer hours at work,” adding that a high representation of women in media outlets might indeed influence social issues “as their perspective is different from men’s, but I do not think it would affect political issues”. “In the Arab region, we tend to be emotional when covering certain issues, and women are more emotional towards social issues,” Shboul said.

Khalaf al-Tahat, deputy dean of the journalism school at Yarmouk University, acknowledges that “women’s presence in leadership positions would, in one way or another, lead to adopting causes and issues related to women’s rights and issues in general”.

Tareq al-Momani, Al-Rai’s chief editor, said he believes that the absence of women from top posts in the media has no impact on content, or on young women’s tendency to join and stay in journalism. He said that “emotions are there in both men and women,” and so, the content and way of handling social issues are not affected by “women’s presence or absence”.

Petra’s chief, Shboul, also said he saw no “deep effect” of the low representation of women in leading positions on content.

5.2. Administrative structures in terms of gender

28.5 respondents (54%) were women journalists supervised by men, while 2.5 respondents (4.7%) were supervised by a woman. 8.5 respondents (16%) had a male boss with a woman superior. 0.5 respondents (1%) were supervised by one woman or more in the chain of command. 3.5 respondents (6.6%) were women bosses supervising one man or more. 0.5 respondents (1%) were female journalists who supervised both a man and a woman. Nine respondents (17%) were out of the chain of command.

Male domination is evident in the administrative hierarchy of media outlets: 70% of women working there had men as their superiors, a picture that reflects the low representation of women in leadership positions in these organisations. This further reflects the reality of women in the broader labour market. However, the ratio of women leaders in the national economy is 27%. The ratio in media is much lower. There is only one woman serving as a chief editor in a daily paper.

Momani, Al-Rai’s chief editor, blames female journalists for their absence from top jobs and subsequent lack of influence, saying: “There are no women employees who have the working experience to assume leadership and top editorial positions,” adding that he had “on more than one occasions offered women journalists leadership posts, such as chief reporter, and they turned down the offer”.

In his estimation, the rejection comes particularly from married women journalists, partly due to “family commitments and inability to stay out late in the evening,” which is a requirement for certain beats, such as covering Cabinet meetings, which normally take place in the evenings.

Assabeel’s Joulani said that “there is nothing within the media organisation that prevents women from becoming leaders,” also attributing the problem to the female journalists themselves.

He said: “We at Assabeel, have offered a female journalist a chance to head the local desk and she said ‘no’. This might be attributed to different reasons, including an inclination among women journalists to not accept administrative posts and unwillingness to do reporting. Some do not want to deal with journalists, while others believe that there are difficulties and obligations associated with managerial positions”.

He ruled out any effect of the low representation of women in the media on the influence of female journalists in these outlets, despite acknowledging that his paper “does not have a women empowerment policy to assume higher positions and a general policy on gender,” because that, as he puts it, “enhances the assumption that there is a discrimination policy in the first place and that is not true in our case”.

Petra University Instructor Suheir Sudani also deems women “unqualified to take over decision-making positions.” There are no women who are “qualified enough to assume decision-making posts,” he said, adding that the majority of female journalists today lack intellect. “When there is an educated and enlightened female journalist, she will easily climb the ladder of leadership”.

“I do not blame the organisation but the women, because the news kitchen is active from 3-12 PM, and women cannot handle that, and so it is not the fault of the organisation, but rather of the environment and society. It is not a problem the institution is blamed for, but a matter of societal culture that needs years to change.”

Kawthar Sawalha, head of the women’s committee at JPA and deputy managing editor at Addustour’s local desk, says that the percentage of women who make it to top posts in the media is not satisfactory. She also blames women journalists themselves, saying that the “problem with female journalists is that they do not engage in the decision-making process related to news. Here I do not blame the organisation, as there is no woman at Addustour who is able to work as the chief reporter or local desk manager”.

She continued: “I do not blame the organisation but the women, because the news kitchen is active from 3-12PM, and women cannot handle that, and so it is not the fault of the organisation, but rather of the environment and society. It is not a problem the institution is blamed for, but a matter of societal culture that needs years to change.”

Former MP and journalist Rula Al-Hroub deems women's assumption of leadership positions "a difficult matter and [socially] rejected, implicitly if not explicitly."

"When I used to lead the editorial board and direct criticism at a male colleague or draw his attention to some issue, he automatically felt upset because I am a woman. The perception they have is that women are nice and friendly creatures that should not play the role of the dominator over men. Even intellectuals who claim they support women do not accept criticism from women in public, while they do if it comes from men. This is what I learnt in most of my leadership experiences," Hroub says.

She adds: "Women cannot ascend to leadership posts at any media outlet except through unsound ways because it is men who make promotion decisions".

Okour, who heads the economic empowerment section at the Labour Ministry, sees that "women's occupation of leadership positions is not an easy thing for several reasons, including economic, social and cultural ones, in addition to others related to the nature of women".

She notes that "there are special issues related to the work of women and their ascent to leading positions in the media sector," explaining that "to prove herself when she assumes a job like this, the woman faces a huge challenge. The question is: Do we have specific approaches to facilitate women's access to these positions, whether in the media or in any other sector?"

Dr Tahat, deputy dean of the journalism school at Yarmouk University, believes that "women's presence or absence from leadership posts is not the issue because they in other positions than leadership can raise women's issues and thus have the power to influence the public opinion".

6. Questionnaire's outcomes

6.1. Society's attitude towards journalism

30% of the respondents said that the society was encouraging and supportive of the media profession, while one journalist (2%) thought that such support is ineffective. Meanwhile, 22 respondents (41%) said that society was not encouraging or was restricting and hindering women's work in the field of media. Of the 22 female journalists, 15 (68%) considered society unsupportive (either on the part of members of the family or the community). 7 journalists (13%) considered society to be restricting and crippling.

The advancement of all types of media over the two past decades, along with the rising number of journalism schools and increasing community openness, all have led to more acceptance, familiarity, and even appreciation in society's attitude towards media and women's presence in the industry. This is partly attributed to the excellence of a group of pioneering women journalists, who have marketed the idea that women's potential in the media sector is no less than that of men.

All of that has led a broad section of the community (57%), as shown in the study, to shift position and become encouraging of women as journalists – especially regarding women's work at TV stations, which has 83% social approval. We should not overlook, however, that a large section of Jordan's inherently conservative society still harbours negative attitudes and suspicion towards women's work in journalism, especially from family members and blood relatives. This attitude is manifested in the discouraging position that 28% of respondents said one or more family members showed toward their media work.

This is confirmed by former MP Rula Al-Hroub, who heads the Arab Parliament Network for Equality. She stresses that "society has changed". Citing her personal experience, she said: "When I joined Kuwait TV in 1985, there was ugly resistance from my distant relatives who disavowed my family, accusing my mother that she brought disgrace upon them. Now parents die to get their daughters a job as a presenter, but they're not that enthusiastic about other jobs like directors, photojournalists or reporters".

However, she acknowledges that there remains a “conservative segment of people who reject to see their daughters on the screen or take journalism as a career, but there has indeed been a quality shift regarding the media.” She adds that “other jobs in the media other than a presenter are not preferred. The presenter is an exception due to the fame they get, which encourages the family to allow it.”

Al-Rai’s chief editor, Momani, also believes that “not everyone in society holds a negative attitude towards women’s work in journalism, as evident in the cases of women journalists in leading positions. There is encouragement and we have started to see journalists with and without head covers on TV without discrimination”.

6.2. Stereotypical distribution of roles, and tasks irrelevant to core job

(This refers to tasks women journalists are asked to do which they consider irrelevant to their job, like serving guests at office or selling ads, among other tasks which male co-workers are not asked to perform).

45 respondents (85% of the total) reported that they had not been asked to perform tasks outside the profession because they were women, while 8 respondents (15%) said that they had been subject to such requests.

Although the overwhelming majority of respondents (85%) reported they had not been asked to perform tasks irrelevant to their core job, the remaining ones did indicate their superiors had done so in various ways. This happened more at websites and weeklies, where 37.5% of female journalists working there recalled being requested to perform tasks outside their professional role, followed by 29% of female journalism students and interns.

Some of the tasks female journalists were asked to do involved degrading requests that compromised their dignity. One journalist, Rania Sarayreh, said: “I used to work for a newspaper that had hired someone to make and serve tea and coffee. I was asked to wash the glasses and make tea and coffee for the manager’s guests. There were male colleagues, but they were not asked to do that. It is just I was the woman and they assumed it was my role”.

A female journalism student recalled that a professor at college “used to ask a certain student to go and sit with him at his office 'to help him follow up on class matters'. The student found that strange and uncomfortable”. An intern at a university radio station said that they used to ask females, not males, to be at office exactly at eight.

6.3. Gender-based discrimination in opportunities and benefits

This refers to gender-related discrimination in training opportunities, attending workshops and conferences, promotions, special or new assignments and others, in a way that negatively affects women journalists’ prospects and career development.

Twenty-eight out of 53 respondents (53%) reported that they had been subject to gender discrimination in terms of career opportunities and job benefits. Meanwhile, 25 out of 53 respondents (47.2%) said that there had been no discrimination of any kind with regards to opportunities and fringe benefits. 6 out of these 28 participants (11.3%) said that there had been gender discrimination in terms of training opportunities and workshops, while 9 women journalists (17%) said there had been discrimination regarding conference attendance and travel opportunities. 13 of them (24.5%) said that there had been discrimination in assigning special tasks.

Training opportunities, workshops, conferences, special and new assignments are keys to the professional development of women journalists. More than half of these women working in mass media spoke of facing discrimination against them in these fields.

Special and new assignments accounted for the largest proportion of complaints of this discrimination, and were most evident among female journalists in the fields of television (46%) and radio journalism (31%).

Respondents' complaints concerning discrimination in opportunities for training and workshops came third, accounting for 11.3% of complaints. Complaints of this type of discrimination were highest in daily newspapers and news agencies (25%), at a time when these organisations are supposed to be the most active in providing training courses and workshops for their employees. The majority of complaints of discrimination in travel and conference attendance assignments were in news websites and weeklies, outlets widely known for lacking institutional systems that govern the process of selecting who should be dispatched to cover such functions.

Citing another example of discrimination, a journalism school student said: "There were faculty members who discriminated on the basis of appearance rather than meritocracy and performance. A large proportion of the female students who were selected to attend training workshops and courses were chosen based on this criterion".

A radio reporter said that in cases when there was financial compensation for "an assignment abroad, they almost always picked a man so that he would benefit from the money, especially from among those with good ties with the management. I was marginalised when it came to such opportunities; I remember once when they assigned a female journalist to cover a concert for the station because she was a liberal woman and wore no head cover, and at the same time, was in good terms with the manager, despite her bad performance and the fact that she was ignorant of the ABCs of journalism". Another recalled that "in case there was a training course involving travel, they would have decided in advance the journalist who would go. Of course all were males and I've never heard that a female journalist travelled on such missions. Travel opportunities are only assigned to male journalists."

Hroub confirms that "media organisations discriminate in assigning tasks involving travel and training abroad; there is positive discrimination in favour of men. After all, decision makers in these organisations are men".

Al-Rai's Momani denies there is any discrimination against women in terms of assignment distribution, arguing that the opposite is true, as "our society likes to deal with women journalists and tends to disclose information to them; this is a human nature".

6.4. Gender discrimination in rewarding performance morally and financially

This refers to discrimination on the part of managers and co-workers when it comes to rewarding good performance and work achievements morally and financially through a transparent compensation system, annual pay raises, and bonuses, a matter which negatively affects the psychological and social environment in the place where women journalists work.

Thirty out of 53 respondents (57%) reported gender discrimination in rewarding good performance and achievements, both financially and morally. Meanwhile, 23 out of 53 respondents (43%) said that there had been no discrimination of any kind in terms of appreciating performance and achievements, both morally and financially. An average of 14.5 out of 30 participants (27%) reported that there had been discrimination in promotions, assessment or bonuses, while an average of 15.5 journalists (29%) said there was discrimination in financial compensation, manifest in the lack of a transparent compensation system that governs wages, annual pay raises and bonuses. Meanwhile, an average of 23 respondents (43%) said that there had been no discrimination regarding these aspects.

About 56% of female journalists emphasized that there had been discrimination against women in the media, especially in privately-owned outlets, in terms of rewarding good performance and achievements financially and morally, and that there was no transparent system governing the issue of wages, annual pay raises and bonuses.

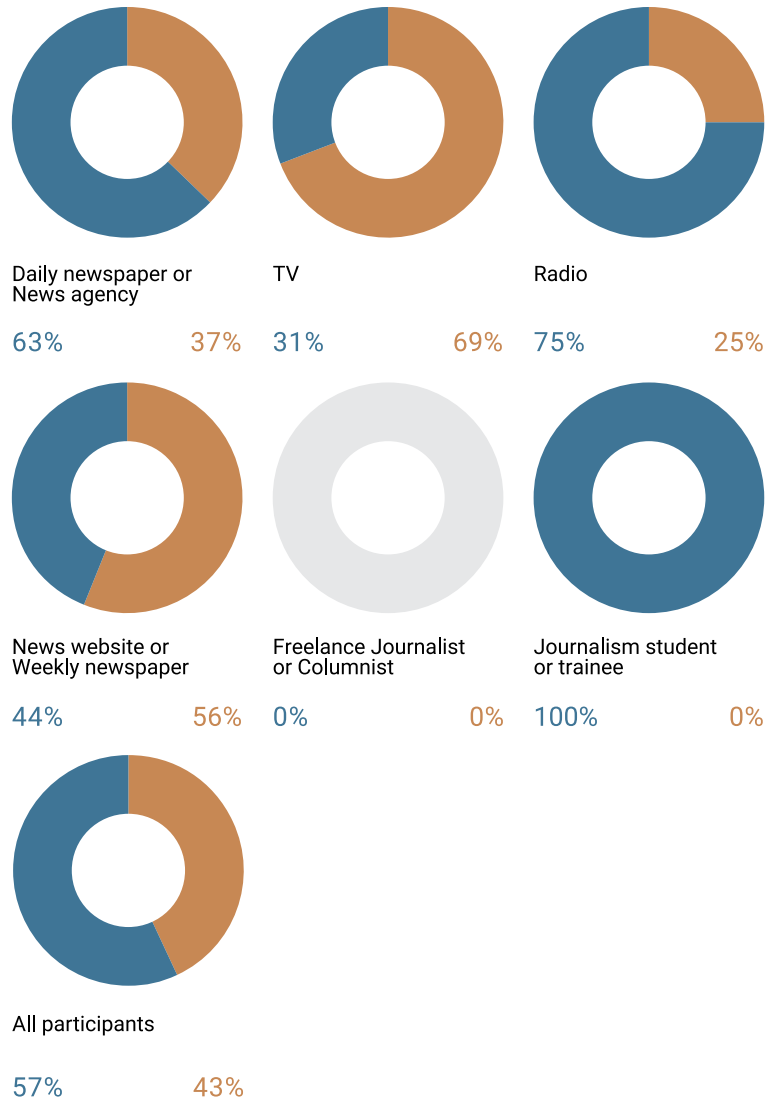
A high ratio of among female journalists working in radio stations (50%) and daily newspapers or news agencies (44%) spoke of discrimination, indicating that there is a lack of transparency, if not a complete absence of institutional regimes that govern the process of rewarding good performance morally and financially.

The Jordan news agency, Petra, is an exception: it has an established system based on the Civil Service Bylaw, which curbs subjectivity in treatment of employees. Such discrimination triggers numerous complaints among women journalists, one of whom said: "They did not grant me the 'employee of the month' award although I came to work with a broken leg and did not take a sick leave, and the award went to a male employee who did nothing."

She added: "This employee, unfortunately, has no qualifications, but he was trained and appointed a programme manager because the director (a woman) liked him and saw potential in him. We, female presenters, have more experience than he does, yet they do not want to appoint a woman as a programme manager".

Another female journalist said: "There is no specific system for financial and moral support. The proof is that I have a bachelor degree of journalism and there are male journalists who do not have a high school degree, yet they are paid better than me. If I ask for better conditions, there is no response, and I have to accept this situation because I have a home and a family to support."

Percentage of gender-based discrimination in opportunities and benefits



● Gender-based discrimination
● No Gender discrimination

6.5. Discrimination in the form of failure to cater for the needs of female journalists in the workplace

Nine of the 53 respondents (17%) reported that they had been subject to gender discrimination in the form of the management's disregard of their needs in the workplace. Meanwhile, 36 out of the 53 respondents (68%) said that there had been no discrimination in the form of disregarding women's needs at work. The 8 participants who are independent journalists and trainees (15%) are not committed to specific working hours and were excluded.

“I received my appointment letter at the TV station when I was pregnant and when the management learnt that I was expecting, they told me I could not start my job unless after delivery because it was not appropriate to appear on TV while pregnant.”

Four of the total number of female journalists (7.5%) said that they had been forced to do working hours that were not suitable for women, while one of them (2%) said she had been assigned tasks that were inappropriate for women. An average of four women (7.5%) said that there were no suitable facilities or working conditions for women, while an average of 36 women (68%) said there had been no discrimination in these aspects. The 8 independent journalists, out-of-office workers and students (15%) were excluded.

Despite the fact that about two-thirds of female journalists said they had not faced problems in terms of their needs as women at work, there were complaints reported mainly by journalists working in news websites and weekly newspapers on being forced to do working hours unsuitable for women and given tasks incompatible with their nature. They also said their organizations lacked convenient facilities for women.

One journalist said her employer was making things hard for her in this regard to force her to quit the job. “There are no efforts whatsoever to provide an appropriate working environment,” she said. “They’ve tried to force women journalists to quit through pressuring them to work at any hour whether night or day, and they were complaining about a female colleague because she took ‘too many’ days off and was demanding, so they told her: ‘You’ve got to sort it out’”. There are, however, extreme cases where women's needs are totally disregarded in the sector, including what one female journalist recalled: “I received my appointment letter at the TV station when I was pregnant and when the management learnt that I was expecting, they told me I could not start my job unless after delivery because it was not appropriate to appear on TV while pregnant because that ‘would bring criticism upon us’”.

Sawalha, deputy managing editor at Addustour's local desk, says that “journalism is not a women-friendly environment and will never be,” adding that the job has no fixed working hours and is unfriendly when it comes to women's needs.

Citing an example, she says: “Any emergency might come up and I'll have to cover it any time. There are no women journalists who go home to do house chores, except those who only gather information for their stories over the phone”.

6.6. Discrimination from sources of information

This refers to discrimination in access to information from sources such as public figures, officials, academics, pundits, businesspeople or members of the general public.

26 of the 53 respondents reported that they had been discriminated against on the basis of gender by sources of information, namely politicians and government officials. 27 of the 53 respondents (51%) said that there had been no discrimination from any information source (including public figures such as officials, academics, experts, businessmen, or members of the general public). As several women journalists explained, the process of obtaining information requires connections and communication with officials at professional, personal and other levels. This type of maneuvering favors male media professionals because they have time, they said. Jordan's male-dominated society also restricts women from playing such a role.

"There is discrimination and difficulty faced by women journalists when trying to access information," said one female journalist. "Officials, mostly in Jordan, are more comfortable talking to men than women."

"Obtaining information is not easy in our society, and large organisations designate specialised journalists as media spokespersons to provide the information and news they deem publishable, and this weakens the media to a certain degree," said another, adding: "We notice that they do not choose women journalists for the role of media spokespersons in such institutions".

Within the same context, former MP Hroub said: "We are a male-dominated society; women cannot obtain information from an official who prefers to talk to a male journalist with whom he hangs out, someone who goes along with the former and a close bond connects both."

"These are things that women cannot do," she said. "There are many social situations where women's presence is still rejected. Our politicians set their preferences on the basis of social relations, giving priority to men over women, and so men journalists' chances of obtaining a classified piece of information are stronger than those of women".

6.7. Sexual harassment in the workplace: verbal and physical

The legal definition of workplace sexual harassment is suggested by John Hopkins University as unwelcome sexual advances that create a hostile work environment when the other person deems such sexual advances immoral or that rejecting them would reflect adversely or perceived as such on the existing or possible work circumstances.

Sexual advances in the workplace include sexual conduct and obscene body gestures, requesting sexual favours or imposing them, making comments in a sexually suggestive way, gesturing at someone in a degrading or humiliating manner based on gender-based generalisations and making any unwelcome advances, whether physical or verbal, of a sexual nature in an explicit or implicit manner. All of this creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment and unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance, subjecting victims of sexual harassment to types of harm related to their employment, promotion, re-employment or continued employment. The person targeted with sexual harassment is unable to reject sexual advances out of fear that their resistance might have negative effects on their work conditions, job offers, promotion, re-employment or continued employment.

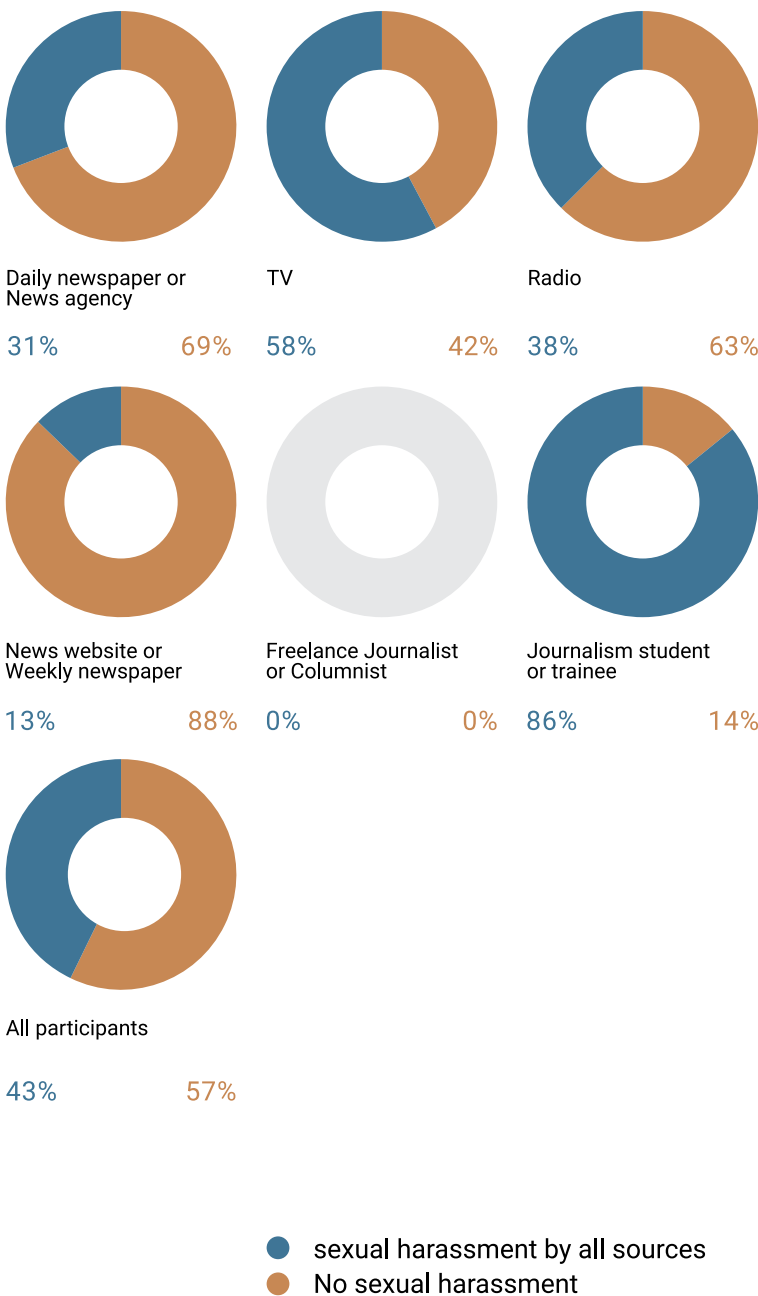
Workplace harassment may come from the owner, manager, chief editor, direct supervisor, co-workers or subordinates. 23 out of the 53 respondents (43%) said they had been verbally or physically harassed in their workplaces. 8 of them said they had been physically harassed, while 30 female journalists (57%) said they had experience no such harassment.

One female journalist (2%) from the 23 who experienced harassment said she was harassed by the chief editor, while an average of 5.5 respondents (10%) said that they had been harassed by their direct supervisors, including 3 cases of physical sexual harassment. Meanwhile, 10 respondents 19%, said they had been harassed by male co-workers, including 4 cases of physical sexual harassment, while an average of 6.5 respondents (12%) said that they had been harassed by their university instructors or managers of a university radio station, including 1 case

of physical sexual harassment. About 42% of women journalists reported that they had experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment in the workplace, primarily by their direct manager, colleague, instructor or radio director at the university.

There is less harassment from chief editors (2%). This is due to the nature of work as there is little interaction with the chief editor, while there is almost daily interaction with direct supervisors, co-workers and others. The harassment rates reported by women journalists and alleged incidents of physical sexual harassment are striking, with women journalists reporting harassment by the direct supervisor in three cases, and by a male colleague in four. The rate of harassment cases revealed by female journalists at television stations was 25%, followed by a smaller percentage at radio stations, and less at dailies and news agencies.

Percentage of sexual harassment in the workplace



One radio journalist said: "The radio manager always harassed me with his bad looks and made me think a thousand times about leaving work. One day he asked for a relationship with me, and I refused. The following day, I was shocked at a decision to suspend me and assigning reading the news to an associate trainee who had only worked for the station for two days."

Another journalist recalled: "I was resting in the office, placing my head on the desk, when a young co-worker came in. I thought he wanted to pray, but I was shocked that he pinched in my side. I was confused and did not know how to act. I just withdrew crying. I was absent from work for two weeks, and when I returned, I bashed him - but he said he was joking and that I was like his sister. However, I did act and filed a complaint against him."

A third journalist also recalled a harassment incident when she was a newcomer to work, saying: "I was a fresh graduate and the editor began to talk to me about sexual matters and told me he could touch me without rupturing the hymen".

"When he invited me to have lunch with him, I quit work at that organisation".

One of the female journalists said that some of her colleagues did not hesitate to "put their hands on my shoulder or touch my face."

"I went out with a male colleague on a press assignment, and as we came back, he invited me for coffee. Then he began to tell me: You have a beautiful figure and appearance, don't waste that. Of course I did not do anything to him and I only shut him up." Another female journalist said: "A female colleague had to work in the evening because she was going to college during the day, and once her manager offered to massage her back, taking advantage of being alone at the office that night. Traumatized, she collapsed and immediately quit her job. She was punished by denying her the financial compensation she was entitled to."

A female employee at a news website was also witness to harassment of one of her female friends. She recalled: "The manager offered her a JD100 pay raise to accept escorting him in evening hangouts. She immediately resigned her job."

A journalism school student also reported a harassment incident perpetrated by her instructor. She said: "He pulled me to him and hugged me forcefully. I was then in my freshman year. I fought and freed myself and left crying. I told a friend of mine and we went to another instructor who we trusted. When I told him what had happened, he advised me not to file a complaint because nothing would happen to the harasser. I also told my mother who echoed the same advice and I learnt later that female colleagues had had similar experiences with the same instructor."

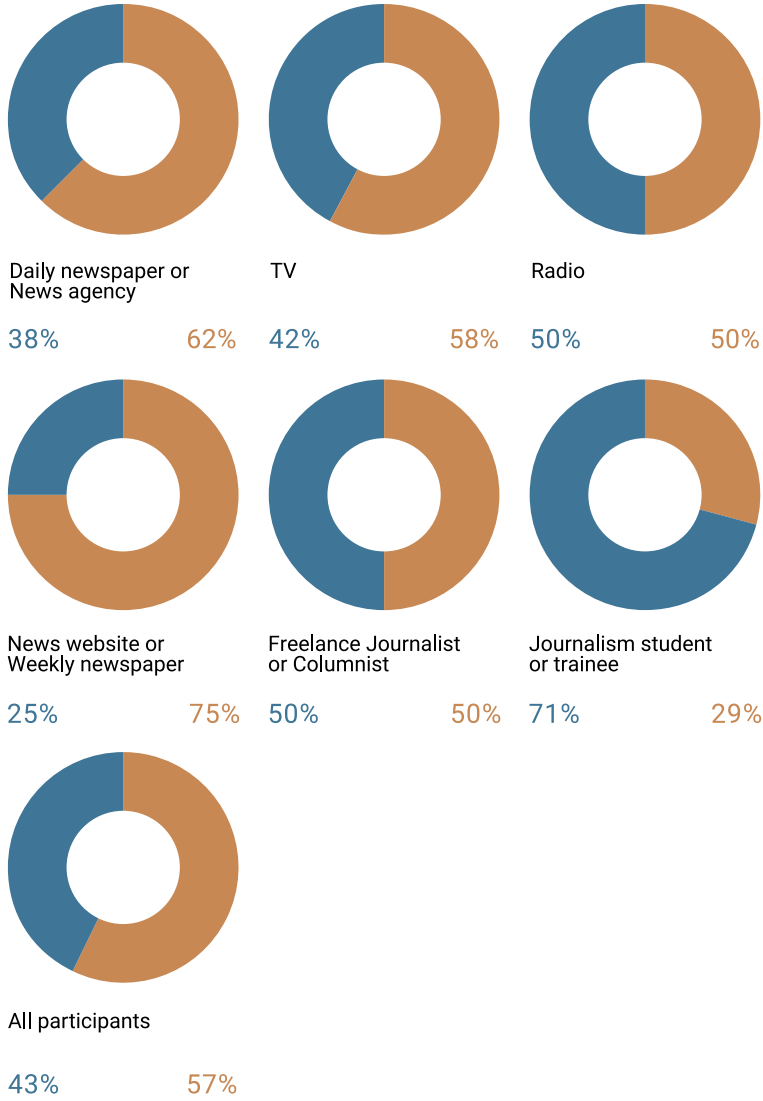
Nevertheless, Petra University professor Suheir Sudani believes that "sexual harassment has nothing to do with the place of work, and most of it occurs in closed environments." She blames the women themselves for harassing, saying: "the girls who act playfully with men obviously do that purposefully."

Dr. Tahat, deputy dean of the journalism school at Yarmouk University, also plays down the seriousness of harassment and its prevalence, saying: "The rate of harassment is insignificant and (we have to establish whether) the harassment was verbal or otherwise, and whether it was intentional or unintentional. Even we, men, are exposed to verbal harassment, so it is not limited to females. Women are known for their sharp tongues. Anyway, the rate is insignificant and after all, it is a society's culture".

Hroub believes that "harassment is everywhere, not only in the media. As long as you are a woman, you are exposed to implicit or explicit harassment".

She adds: "It is about the woman involved and her personality and ability to resist harassment and standing up to perpetrators. However, the woman could have a strong personality but her financial situation could be so tough that she is forced to remain silent."

**Percentage of sexual harassment
from sources**



● sexual harassment by all sources of information
● No sexual harassment

6.8 Sexual harassment from sources: verbal and physical

23 of the 53 respondents (43%) said they had experienced verbal or physical harassment from sources, while 30 respondents (57%) said they had not been exposed to harassment.

An average of 15.5 respondents (29%) said that they had been sexually harassed by politicians or government officials. Four of these cases involved physical harassment, while an average of 0.5 respondents (1%) reported sexual harassment by academics. An average of 2.5 respondents (5%) said they had been harassed by experts, and the same figure and ratio apply to those who said they had been sexually harassed by businessmen. Two respondents (4%) reported that they had been sexually harassed by members of the general public. Thirty respondents (57%) said they had not experienced sexual harassment from sources of information.

The prevalence of harassment from sources is close (about 44%) to that of workplace harassment. As the data showed, politicians and government officials ranked first in likelihood to harass, with 29% of female journalists reporting that they had been harassed by persons in this category.

This high percentage is due to the higher incidence of contact between media professionals and sources of official information versus other sources. Four of the cases reported by female journalists included physical sexual harassment. Women journalists also reported harassment by experts and businessmen at an equal rate of 5%, including one case of physical sexual harassment.

A female journalist recalled one incident initiated by a head of a professional association: "I called him for information so he asked me to stop by his office. When I arrived, his secretary was with him and he ordered him to make coffee and leave us alone. Then he started to talk about personal matters that had nothing to do with the issue I wanted to meet him for. He started to encourage me to live my life, have fun and loosen up. I responded with harsh words and told him I was not interested anymore in information from him".

Another said: "I arranged a TV interview with an official. He started a day before the interview to call me on my phone and invite me for coffee and a chat, then he started to send me WhatsApp texts like: 'Hey sweet thing, why have stopped talking to me, or you are not interested in a statement?'. In another incident, the same journalist said that "an official started to send me his photos on WhatsApp, and when I did not reply, he asked about the reason of the lack of response, which then developed into words of abuse, like "Why don't you reply you whelp? Why are you so arrogant? Who do you think you are?"

A third journalist said: "Some officials hit on female journalists because they think they are easy and cheap. They might offer them travel or lunch. I remember that one source tried to hold my hand. I was rattled and left immediately".

Another said: "An official used to start flirting the moment I called him and another in a high position was offering me things and saying he would do anything I wanted. I used to withdraw in a polite way."

A journalism student reported a harassment incident when she was preparing an assignment. "I conducted an interview with a young man who was concerned with the issue. After that, he started to harass me through phone calls and texts. Once he wrote: 'I want to come and bite you! I responded with harsh words and ended all contacts with him for good'".

Another student said she contacted an expert seeking information as part of a press assignment. "He asked to put his arm around my waist. I said 'no' and wrapped up the interview hastily because of his constant staring at my breasts."

Atef al-Joulani, Assabeel's editor-in-chief, commented that the rates of sexual harassment shown in this study were "too high, shocking, alarming and upsetting. Officials are supposed to be educated people."

He said that, "generally speaking, if I was asked about the rate of harassment in our society, I would estimate it at 5-10%, no more. But if the rate shown in the survey was accurate, we are facing a social problem that needs to be addressed. I do not think such a rate would be real in a conservative society like Jordan's."

Petra's Faisal Shboul said that "the reported rate of exposure to harassment is exaggerated. I do not think that officials are so immoral that they hit on women who approach them. In fact I see that there is harassment initiated by the other side (women) too."

Dr. Eman Okour, head of the economic empowerment section at the Labour Ministry, said that the sexual harassment women journalists face from sources is not a surprise. "When an official has no manners, is unprofessional and uncivilised, he will want to trade information with some favours. Unfortunately, there are many people who abuse the power they have."

6.9. Sexual harassment during out-of-office assignments

Twenty-five of the 53 respondents (47%) said they had been verbally or physically harassed while performing work outside the office or commuting to and from work or college. Four of these cases involved physical harassment, while 28 respondents (53%) said they had not been subject to harassment.

One woman journalist (2%) said she had been sexually harassed by a co-worker during field coverage, while 1.5 respondents (2%) reported that they had been sexually harassed by participants in surveys. An average of 21.5 female journalists reported that they had been sexually harassed by passers-by or passengers while commuting. One respondent (2%) reported that she had been sexually harassed by security men or public officials on the street, while 28 respondents (53%) said that they had not been exposed to these types of harassment.

The rate of sexual harassment women journalists were exposed to in this context (47%) is similar to the rate of harassment by sources and co-workers. The bulk of this harassment came from passers-by on the street or passengers during commuting (41%), which is predictable due to the nature of field work carried out by female journalists. Three of the cases reported involved physical attacks, while there was a 2% rate of sexual harassment during field assignments by male colleagues. The data also showed that the highest frequency of harassment was reported by female journalists working for TV stations, with 50% of respondents from this sector reporting incidents that occurred out of office or during their commutes.

One journalist said that she was "boarding a fixed-route service taxi on the way to downtown to write a report and there was on board a young man, who, when he got off the car, put his hand on a sensitive part of my body. I felt so bad in that awkward situation". Another woman reporter said: "We have experienced verbal harassment when crowds circled us when we were filming, saying: Hey beautiful, why don't you film me? Give me the camera and I'll film you and interview you on any topic you want."

A third reporter said: "During Jerash Festival, I was harassed when there was jostling at the entrance. I recognised the man and reported him to police. Only then he apologised". One female journalist said: "I remember a female co-worker telling me she had been out on a field assignment when a crowd circled her and were grabbing her hair and neck". Another complained: "When I get to the street on an assignment, young men gather around me and it might happen that someone would get close to me and touch my body. When I cover rallies downtown, touching happens although I am extremely careful to prevent that".

A journalism student cited an incident when a policeman harassed her: "I was in a [public transportation] car when a policeman who was sitting beside me winked at me and gestured with hand". She added: "Once I was at a police station to report a young man with whom I had a situation. The looks of policemen at the station to me were very annoying, in the sense that they were lusty, although my father was with me." Kawthar Sawalha believes that "harassment is originated in the society's culture, as the woman is still treated by men as a body, a figure and looks. Harassment is always hushed up but women journalists should break free from their fear of reporting it".

6.10. Reporting harassment or discrimination

Two respondents (4%) said that if they were harassed or discriminated against, they would inform the owner or the general manager of the media organisation, while 9 female journalists (17%) said they would tell the chief editor, and seven respondents (13%), said they would complain to the direct superior or an instructor at the journalism school. Three female journalists (6%) said they would share it with a friend or a colleague and three respondents (6%) said that they would tell a family member. 19 respondents (36%) said they would tell a union, an organisation or a government department, and ten respondents (19%) said they would not tell anyone.

The percentages in these responses are linked with the women journalists' sexual harassment experiences. Their first choice of where to file complaint (36%)s was a union, an organisation or a government agency, rather than the organisations where they work. This can be explained by the respondents' testimonies that there were no systems, mechanisms or designated parties concerned with this type of complaints in their workplaces to protect them from the consequences of reporting the incident. The women said they feared losing their jobs, impact on their status at work, or even impact on their reputations, as some would blame them for the harassment. The second option was the editors-in-chief (17%), who demonstrated the lowest rates of harassment in the workplace. They may thus be seen as somewhat neutral persons, and their authority may contribute help protect women from harassment.

The percentage of willingness to tell a family member is much lower, reason being that they fear that the family, especially the husband, would exert pressure on them to leave the job. These concerns drive 19% of respondents to hush up and to live with the problem as an unavoidable evil in the context of their work in a media.

Dr. Okour confirms this, citing her own experience: "Women in our society are afraid to talk about harassment. We at the Ministry of Labour experience harassment but dare not talk about it, because society is always against women." She adds: "If I said I was harassed, they would not blame the man. They would immediately say 'you are responsible', because, for example, 'you do not dress decently or you speak in an inviting manner. You opened the door for the harasser and you are the evil devil, while he is the infallible angel.'"

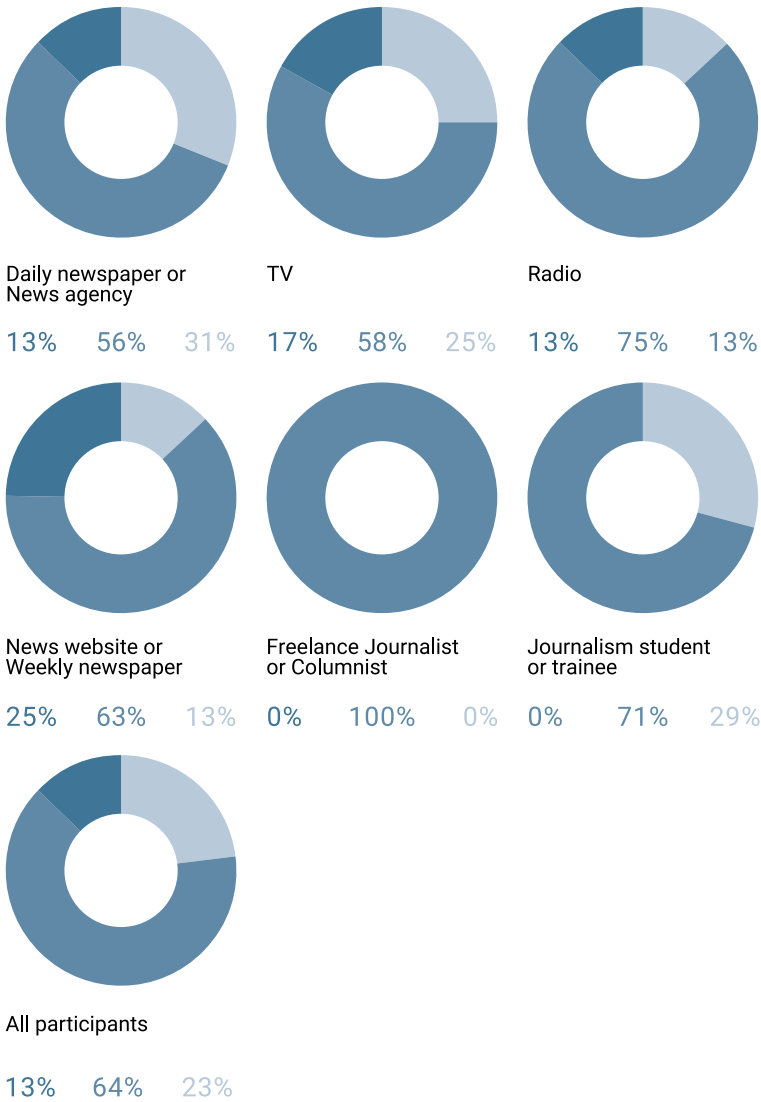
Kawthar Sawalha said similarly: "Women journalists in every location, whether the workplace, the street or anywhere, are exposed to harassment, but regrettably, they are afraid to report it. I believe we should speak out and I find no excuse for doing otherwise." She adds: "I am the head of the women committee at the JPA and we have not received any harassment complaint from any female journalist... I myself have been in such a situation several times and I have never resorted to the syndicate or the judiciary. I handled it myself."

6.11. Trust in the viability of reporting harassment or discrimination in the workplace

Seven respondents (13%) said that they always trusted the viability of reporting harassment or gender discrimination in the workplace, while 34 respondents (64%) said they did not trust this process at all, and 12 respondents (23%) said they trust it in certain cases, such as physical harassment only, or when they report the organisation itself. The overall rate of women journalists who had trust in the viability of such complaints was significantly low (13%), compared with those who had no trust whatsoever in the feasibility of the process (64%). The mistrust rates are highest at radio stations, accounting for three quarters of respondents in this category.

One of those who said they had no trust at all said that in cases of harassment, society looks at the woman as "always the wrongdoer", adding that if she reports such an incident, the case will be examined by a male judge, who will hush it up. "We rarely find just people," she said. "The majority blames the woman, citing the way she dresses, behaves or use makeup or say she is impolite. They will convict her, unfortunately".

Percentage of trust in the viability of reporting harassment or discrimination in the workplace



- always trust
- do not trust at all
- trust it in certain cases, such as physical harassment

Another journalist said she did not trust the process “because it is a male-dominated society and because I fear retribution from the person I report”.

Dr. Khalaf Tahat believes that refraining from reporting in the event of harassment “is proof of the lack of trust in the procedures taken to handle these cases, and lack of awareness of the rights of the victim, whether male or a female.”

Wafaa Al-Khadra, a researcher in gender issues at the American University in Madaba, says that “people always seeks to cover up harassment cases because it 'hurts the national image'; when a woman reports such conduct, she is told: 'You are harming the reputation of the country’”. She adds: “The other aspect of the issue is the silencing the voice of women when her body is abused, alleging that if she speaks out, it is an act of betrayal to society and national identity.” She stresses that “there are women who do not want to report harassment lest they are accused of betrayal or being a moving element of sexual temptation... So they just shut up”.

“People always seeks to cover up harassment cases because it ‘hurts the national image’; when a woman reports such conduct, she is told: ‘You are harming the reputation of the country’”.

7. Summary and conclusions

The study results shed light on the challenges facing women journalists in their careers and their physical and moral impact on these women.

The findings show that women have faced and are still facing a set of hindrances that diminished their role as journalists over the years. They have also limited the prospects of their professional development and progress. These obstacles, which originate from gender-based discrimination against women journalists, are explicit in certain cases and subtle in others. They can be summed up as follows:

- Lack of consideration of women’s needs at work, as employers impose working hours regime unsuitable for women, who are at times assigned jobs that do not suit their nature. Workplaces often do not have nurseries for female employers’ children.
- Appointments, compensations, pay raises and promotions do not follow transparent rules, but are subject to the mood of the management, with evident discrimination. At state-run media institutions, which employ several women journalists, such a system is governed by the Civil Service Bylaw – yet this regulation is criticised by human rights watchdogs for failure to cater for the needs of women.
- All of the above have rendered the work environment for women journalists unattractive and even repellent. This explains the huge gap between the number of women graduates of journalism faculties at Jordanian universities (more than 50%) and the actual number of women working for Jordan’s media institutions.
- The literature and statutes of media institution lack any codes that take into consideration the need to achieve balance between the numbers of women and men journalists, even to match the percentage of women’s presence in the labour market. These organisations resist and sometimes refuse to draft such codes, arguing that they do not discriminate between the two genders and that they recruit based on merit.
- Women journalists working in media struggle with discrimination at several levels, including training opportunities, nomination for workshops and conferences, and assignment for special or novel tasks, all of which are key to professional development. They are also subject to discrimination in terms of performance evaluation its financial and moral rewards.
- The absence of general legislation and crystal-clear rules within media organisations to criminalise sexual harassment and impose penalties on perpetrators exposes women journalists to harassment in the workplace and in the field from various parties: bosses, coworkers, and sources, including politicians, government officials, experts and average people in the street.

- While the survey findings regarding sexual harassment are shocking, with 45% of respondents reporting such harassment including blunt physical harassment, a culture of impunity has led many of these women to lose faith in the viability of reporting perpetrators. There is a lack of trust even in administrative disciplinary measures within their organisations, especially when perpetrator is the boss or a co-worker.
- This has resulted in a high percentage of women journalists' dissatisfaction with their job reality, given that the work environment discourages women's work and professional progress and is frustrating and repellent for female journalists at certain stages of their lives, like when they become mothers. It is the media organizations' responsibility to cater for their employees' special needs imposed by a society which burdens women with the responsibilities of raising children, caring for the family and managing household affairs.

8. Recommendations

- Amending the Labour Law and Civil Service Bylaw to enhance the accomplishments of women, through increasing the duration of maternity leave, extending breastfeeding hours, setting up the necessary facilities and lowering the minimum requirement for the number of babysitters at nurseries. Also recommended is mandating a flexible working hours system, rather than leaving employees' schedules at the mercy of employers and managers.
- Encouraging privately-owned media organisations to help draft transparent institutional regimes that curb discrimination against women journalists and instate a satisfactory degree of equality with their male co-workers in terms of compensation, promotions, pay raises, training opportunities, attending conferences, special assignments, incentives and rewards for achievement and good performance.
- Amending relevant legislation to adopt positive discrimination bolstering women's presence in various labour sectors including media. Instating a women's quota in leadership positions in media organisations, proportionate to the percentage of their participation in the labour market.
- Amending the membership regime at the JPA to create mechanisms of support for female members, enhance their role and safeguard their rights at media organisations, including a mechanism to process complaints of harassment and discrimination.
- Acquainting women journalists with the amendments made to the Penal Code regarding sexual harassment as a crime, which exists in the law under other labels, and encouraging them to resort to the judiciary when they are harassed and their employers fail to hold perpetrators accountable.
- Creating institutional regimes to protect women journalists from harassment and setting up mechanisms to process complaints of harassment and discrimination against female employees at media organisations.

As part of the research, a workshop was held with 15 male and female journalists representing the various sub-sectors of the industry on February 26, 2018, where the outcomes of the study were presented and discussed. Participants came up with the following recommendations:

First: Enhancing women's presence in leading positions to ensure the best portrayal of women in media content.

Second: Conducting comprehensive studies within media organisations to figure out the problems underlying their gender imbalance, and identifying the weaknesses and strengths to close the gaps, with the aim of helping women journalists ascend to leadership posts at media organisations.

Third: increasing the number of nurseries at media organisations to look after the children of both female and male journalists. Such facilities support the career development of women journalists through helping them balance their roles as journalists and mothers. They also engage fathers in providing care to their children without affecting their professional performance.

Fourth: Proposing amendments to the Labour Law concerning the flexible working hours bylaw, designating nurseries in workplaces and backing the amendments currently under debate at the Lower House.

Fifth: Drawing up policies and administrative regimes at media organisations in a manner that supports gender balance at all levels, including leadership.

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This assessment study has been carried out to inform on women journalists' working conditions and their representation in Jordan's media institutions. The study is based on UNESCO'S Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM).



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