Suffering in Silence:
The resilience of Pakistan's female journalists to combat sexual harassment, threats and discrimination

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Abstract

Pakistan's journalists confront severe safety risks across the country and impunity to crimes against them allows the perpetrators to go unpunished. Now the country is recognized as one of the deadliest places for working journalists in the world. Given this situation, the Pakistani female journalists are more vulnerable because they are not only prone to safety risks and sexual harassment, but also they face gender discrimination when it comes to their recruitment and equal pay-scale. In the past decade, there has been an alarming increase in attacks on female journalists and incidents of their sexual harassment in Pakistan. Notwithstanding the growing plague of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the country, the resilience of female journalists to work within a threatening and prejudiced environment has not yet fully explored and analysed. Therefore, drawing on the *postcolonial feminist theory*, this study aims to investigate the Pakistani female journalists' lived experiences of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination. The study also analyses the impacts of sexual harassment, threats and gender discrimination on the country's female journalists. To achieve the aforementioned aims, this study uses the qualitative methods of in-depth interviews and focus groups discussion, and offers a thematic analysis of qualitative data.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, threats, gender discrimination, resilience level, the Pakistani female journalists

Introduction

Sexual harassment[i] is a dilemma that almost every society in the world continues to deal with today. More recently, the world has come across shocking instances followed under the #MeToo campaign that has encouraged increasing numbers of women to share their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse. Attention is turning to perpetrators and the structures that protect them (Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2018). For the first time, from Hollywood to the airline industry, the world is witnessing that powerful abusers face real

condemnations for sexual harassment. One prominent example is of Hollywood film director, Harvey Weinstein, the co-owner of US Entertainment Company (Miramax Films), who was accused of sexual harassment by Hollywood actress, Alyssa Milano in October 2017. This prominent case has revived #MeToo movement across the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Israel and India (Kunst, Bailey, Prendergas, and Gundersen 2018). Now women are increasingly reporting their stories of sexual abuse especially on social media. In the last couple of years, #MeToo campaign has gained momentum with the emergence of other hashtags such as: "#MeNoMore; #TrustWomen; #BelieveWomen; #BeenRapedNeverReported; #YesAllWomen; #HimToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #TimesUp and #NowAustralia. These hashtags suggests an "intersectionality between sexual violence, identity politics, race, ethnicity, religion, language, class and human rights in our daily lives" (Rodino-Colocino 2018; Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2018; Keller, Mendes, and Ringrose 2016).

When analysing the case of Pakistan, the relationship between intersectionality and sexual violence is very evident. The Pakistani women have multiple identity components based on their class, ethnicity, religion, language and profession, and there are various grounds for their sexual abuse and oppression. The country's women are apparent victims and it goes beyond one's understanding just how many Pakistani women deal with sexual harassment in their professional and personal lives. Gender discrimination[ii] is another prevailing problem in Pakistan that is the by-product of societal conservatism and religious extremism. The country's journalism profession reflects a very thought provoking situation in terms of women's representation in the profession. "Less than five percent of journalists in Pakistan are women and those in the profession face substantial risks, hurdles and discrimination" (Nusrat 2018). This raises serious questions about how the media can perform its watchdog role when journalists are not safe, and how it can reflect and inform the public opinion when journalism profession is so unrepresentative of the society it serves.

Despite the pressing need of investigating the aforementioned facts, the issues of sexual harassment and gender disparity in Pakistan's journalism profession have not been explored in detail by the local academics yet. Therefore, drawing on the *postcolonial feminist theory*, this study offers insights into three key objectives: (i) to explore the Pakistani female journalists' lived experiences of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination; (ii) to identify the sources (or perpetrators) of sexual harassment, threats and gender discrimination in Pakistan; (iii) to evaluate the impacts of sexual harassment, threats and gender discrimination on Pakistani female journalists' professional and personal lives. In order to achieve these objectives, this study uses the qualitative methods of in-depth interviews and focus groups discussion, and it offers thematic analysis of qualitative data.

Hence, firstly this article explains *postcolonial feminist theory* and *intersectionality* as the framework of this study. Secondly, the article's reviews past studies into women in journalism and recent reports on gender-based harassment and discrimination in the profession. Subsequently, the article elaborates the methodology of this study. The article goes on discussing the findings of this study. Finally, it presents conclusion that proposes some recommendations for combating the challenges of sexual harassment and gender discrimination, thereby to strengthen the role and representation of female journalists in the Pakistani journalism profession.

Theoretical framework

Feminist movements

The feminist movements have battled and continue to campaign for women's rights including the rights to education, suffrage, work, equal pay-scale, own property, marry and maternity leaves. The proponents of feminism have also campaigned and still campaign for women's legal and physical protection from sexual harassment, assault, rapes, verbal and physical abuse, domestic violence, forced marriages and gender discrimination (Hawkesworth 2006; Beasley 1999). Historically, the feminist movements can be classified into three main waves. The *first wave of feminism* traces back its history to the late ninetheenth century, when well-resourced and well-educated women from the Global North raised their voice to have their right to vote and legal protection for gender equality (Lewis and Sara 2003). The *second wave of feminism* gained momentum in the early 1960s and motivated the Western women to battle for their rights related to sexuality, equal pay-scale, domestic issues and non-discriminatory practices at workplace and society on the whole. Critics of first and second waves of feminism assert that these movements have a narrow scope to campaign for women's rights because these movements solely focus on white Western women. And the proponents of first and second waves of feminism largely ignore the differences between women in terms of race and class. In late 1980s, thus the *third wave of feminism* emerged that is called as *postcolonial feminism*. This feminist movement is racially focused and rejects the assumptions of Western feminism that tend to focus on homogenization of women's needs, issues and experiences. Postcolonial feminist movement emphasizes to look at the socio-political and economic contexts and the complex layers of oppression that impinge on the women's lives in the postcolonial societies of the Global South (Mohantay 2004, 1988).

Postcolonial feminist theory and intersectionality

Postcolonial feminism theory attempts to highlight the typicality of women's issues in postcolonial third world countries, especially in the Global South, denouncing 'Western feminism', which tends to accentuate homogenisation and emphasises that all women have the same needs and similar experiences (Mohanty 2004). Postcolonial feminism helps to classify and correct the "blind spots of Western feminist theory (Mohantay 1984, 334), which often produces a 'singular 'Third World woman' as an embodiment for "underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism and overpopulation" (Mohantay and Toress 1991, 5-6). Proponents of postcolonial feminism assert that one must think beyond the Western assumption and ideas about the Third World women that hardly attempts to recognize and address the complexity and fluidity of the lives of these non-Western women. Mohantay (1988, 2004) further suggests that Third World women are not necessarily oppressed and retrained as underlined by Western feminist theorists, and she may be more powerful, if she belongs to an educated and well-off background.

One major achievement of the proponents of postcolonial feminism is their ability to explain the complexity of women in the Third World postcolonial societies. For example, Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (1986) suggest that women in the Third World postcolonial societies suffer from 'double colonization' as they struggle to battle between colonialism and patriarchy both (like in the case of Pakistan). Gayatri Spivak (1988) further extends the idea of 'double colonization' and asserts that poor (such as peasants, tribal, low castes) and black women face difficulty to represent their issues and get their voices heard.

While Petersen and Rutherford (1986) talk about 'double colonization', Spivak turns this into the notion of 'triple colonization, asserting if you are poor, black, and female you get the oppression in three ways. In the post 9/11 secenario, Abu-Lughod (2002) and Santesso (2013) suggest that if you are poor, black, Muslim and female you get the oppression in four ways (Santesso 2013, 5). This progression of postcolonial feminism from double to triple and quadruple approaches indicates the need for a theory, which takes into account multiple oppressions. Kimberlé Crenshaw's 1989 concept of intersectionality fills this gap. Crenshaw's (1989, 1993) concept of 'intersectionality' mainly focuses on to address the issues of American Black women from various perspectives as women do have multiple identities and that can serve as the ground for their oppression.

Within the South Asian diasporic context, the concept of intersectionality was further extended by Actar Brah (1996, 10-16). She emphasizes that a South Asian woman can have multiple identity components and grounds for oppression at once, which is the core idea of intersectionality in various other contexts as well. Brah (1996) underlines that women can be oppressed and discriminated due to a number of contextual factors such as "race and gender, there is class (and caste), religious background, age, disability, sexual orientation, and so on". Therefore, women cannot be seen as a monolithic subject of sexual violence, oppression and discrimination. Rather, any analysis of gender violence, harassment and disparity should be context-based, reflecting the women's issues within their specific historical, political, religious and cultural environments. Therefore, this study draws on *postcolonial feminist theory* and *intersectionality*, which help to understand the intersection between sexual violence, identity politics, race, ethnicity, religion, language, class and human rights in Pakistan (see Rodino-Colocino 2018; Keller, Mendes, and Ringrose 2016; Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2018).

Literature review

Women in journalism: Issues of sexual harassment and online abuse

Every year, journalists confront risks and intimidation and are even killed for bringing the public truth. Female journalists face an extra risk that of being a woman. Physical, sexual and online abuse is a routine reality for many female media professionals across the globe. A number of recent reports by international organizations unpack very depressing facts about what female journalists face as part of their work. According to a recent UNESCO report (2017), "11 female journalists had been killed in 2017 – the highest number since the UN agency started recording killings of journalists in 2006". Women journalists also experience sexual harassment and sexual violence. And they are much more likely to face online abuse (such as sharing embarrassing or cruel content about a person to impersonation, doxing, stalking and electronic surveillance to the non-consensual use of photography and violent threats); online harassment; online rape threats; cyber-stalking; blackmail and much more (Chen and Pain 2017; Edstrom 2016; Ging and Norman 2016; Hunt 2016; International Women Media Foundation 2014). The online harassment of women, sometimes called Cyber-sexism or cyber-misogyny, is specifically gendered abuse targeted at women and girls online. It incorporates sexism, racism, religious prejudice, homophobia and transphobia.

Sexual harassment, threats and online abuse impact not only the wellbeing of the women who are targeted – it can affect their professional and personal lives. Awareness of the issues women journalists face is growing as the media and social media continue to report on issues of sexual harassment, online and offline abuse and sexual violence. However, in

many postcolonial countries, especially in Pakistan, the problem persists because the cases of threats, sexual harassment and violence against female journalists go unreported. Thus, there is a need to dig-out the Pakistani women journalists' lived experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination, thereby to understand how it impacts on their lives and whether they are resilient enough to battle against violence and discrimination against them regardless of their class, ethnicity, religious sect or religion.

Journalism profession and gender discrimination

Journalism scholars have substantially paid attention to gender inequality in the profession. Many past studies have analysed the participation and influence of women in the news media and have revealed the increasing numbers of female journalists globally. Particularly, the growing proportion of Western women in the journalism profession has drawn interest to the woman's status in media organisations and newsroom agendas (Gallagher 2001). However, there are studies that have clearly indicated male dominance in the profession, especially at management level positions such as producers, executives, chief editors and publishers (Byerly 2010; Myer 2009). The growing interest in journalism as a masculine profession has given rise to accusations of a glass ceiling facing female journalists worldwide (Fröhlich and Lafky 2008; Vochocová 2008; Morna 2007). According to many studies, there are obvious differences between women and men in both their experiences and practices of professional work (Zilliacus-Tikkanen 2008; Chambers, Steiner, and Fleming 2004; Steiner 1998).

From a feminist perspective, scholars usually assert that in most cultures men have more opportunities to progress socially and professionally than do women (Hooks 1984). This feminist assumption of gender inequality is quite evident in the Pakistani journalism profession because less than five percent of journalists in the profession are female and most of them are assigned reporting on soft issues such as health, education, social issues, the family, or arts and living (Nusrat 2018; White 2009). The Pakistani female journalists face sexism and discrimination. But the question is whether they are discriminated, abused (either offline or online) and face sexual harassment on the basis of their ethnicity, religion or religious sect, socio-economic status. This study attempts to explore this question by investigating the female journalists' lived experiences of sexual violence and harassment and sexism.

Methodology

Research questions

This study investigates three research questions, namely: (i) How Pakistan's female journalists experience sexual harassment, threats and discrimination when doing their professional work? (ii) What are the sources of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination to female journalists in Pakistan? (iii) How do the challenges of sexual harassment, threats and gender discrimination impact on female journalists' professional and personal lives in Pakistan? In order to investigate these research questions, this study uses the qualitative methods of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Sampling

Using purposive sampling[iii], this study includes responses from a total of forty-one (41) female journalists, of age ranging between 25 and 60 years, from five ethnicities (i.e. Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi, Pashtu and Urdu-speaking) and from three religions (i.e. Muslim, Christian and Hindu). The selected female journalists are full-time employee of Pakistan's mainstream Urdu and English-languages' newspapers and television news channels in Karachi including: five English language's newspapers (i.e. Daily Dawn, Express Tribune, The Nation, The News International and Business Recorder); three Urdu language's newspapers (i.e. Daily Jang, Daily Express and Nawa-e-Waqt); eleven television news channels (i.e. Pakistan Television News Corporation, Geo News, SAMAA News, ARY News, AAJ News, Express News, Dunya News, Ab Tak News, Dawn News, News One and Channel 92).

Precisely, this study incorporates 25 in-depth interviews of female journalists. In addition, this study includes two focus groups discussion: (i) first group is comprised of eight female journalists belonging to Pakistan's mainstream Urdu and English language's newspapers, (ii) and the second group consists of eight female journalists from Pakistan's most influential and mainstream television news channels. For the confidentiality and safety of journalists, interviewees and focus groups participants have been quoted using numbers (between 1 and 25) and alphabets (between A and H for the female focus group from newspapers; between I and P for the female focus group from television news channels) respectively.

Interviews' and focus groups discussions' arrangement

The author has carried out the data collection (i.e. in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) of this study between April 2018 and October 2018 in Karachi. The reason to choose Karachi as the main location of data collection is that the city is media hub of Pakistan. Initially, using personal contacts, the author had prepared a tentative list of 70 journalists and they were contacted through phone calls and e-mails in order to participate in this study. Then the author prepared a final list of journalists who had agreed to participate in this study. The process of arranging in-depth interviews and focus groups discussions was not at all easy because journalists were contacted by the author just four months before Pakistan's 2018 elections (i.e. mid March 2018), which was a busy time-period for female journalists due to their engagement in the coverage of election campaigns and their long and extra hours of duties (especially in television news channels). However, the author managed to have a sample of total 41 female journalists.

Interviews' and focus groups discussions' format and procedures

Each journalist, in this study, has been interviewed for around 50-60 minutes (i.e. almost one hour). And the focus group discussions have been carried out for one and a half hour (i.e. 90 minutes) for each focus group. All interviewed female journalists and focus group participants have been asked questions related to: their real life experiences of sexual harassment, threats (online and offline) and gender crimination that they have faced when doing their duties; sources of threats and discrimination to them and the impact of threats and discrimination on their personal and professional lives.

As far as the procedure of data collection is concerned, all questions (either during interviews or focus groups discussion) have been asked in Urdu-language (i.e. journalists' mother tongue in Pakistan), and then interview and focus groups discussion transcripts have been transcribed in English-language and in verbatim. All participants, in this study, have been provided a project information sheet that provides information about: the objectives of this study, methodology, types of research questions with examples, voluntary participation, confidentiality of journalists' names and access to research findings.

Considering the cultural sensitivity of the Pakistani society, the researcher had also discussed interview questions and focus groups discussions' themes with the research participants in order to ensure comfortability to respond questions related to their real life experiences of sexual harassments, threats and gender discrimination.

Coding process and inter coder reliability (ICR)

This study has followed five coding steps in order to ensure an acceptable level of reliability. At the first step, the author (i.e. the researcher of this study) has worked together with another female coder, a Pakistani Master graduate in Media Studies, who has transcribed the interviews' and focus groups discussions' data. At the second step, the author has done the segmentation of interviews' and focus groups discussions' transcripts. While segments (i.e. research-relevant and meaningful units of transcribed text) can either be a single word or a paragraph, this study considers journalists' responses to each research question (including follow-up questions) as the segments (See also Krippendorff 1995). At the third step, the author has created a manual code book for the qualitative data of this study. For this purpose, the author has created two code books with three portions of interviews' and focus groups discussions' data (i.e. the set of journalists' responses relevant to each research question).

In this study, the author has done coding in the first code book as the key coder. The second coder, in this study, has worked independently to assess the responses of journalists to each research question and has examined the themes that emerge from data. At the fourth step, the author and the second coder have then compared together the list of codes in both coding books and have compared the list of emerging themes in the entire data-set (i.e. interviews' and focus groups discussions' transcripts).

Moreover, it is always imperative to discuss the list of codes with the co-coder in order to ascertain whether the listed codes are relevant to the research questions; whether codes have been listed following the same set of rules, such as relevancy to the study's objectives, careful assessment of texts and segmentation; and above all to ensure a good level of consistency in coding process (See also Boyatzis 1998, 31).

Finally, at the fifth step, the author and the second coder have checked the reliability of codes. Scholarship suggests that "the reproducibility across coders—often called intercoder reliability—where the concern is whether different coders would code the same data the same way (MacPhill et al., 2015; Popping 2010, 1068; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998, 75-85). While there are many ways of statistical calculations for assessing and reporting inter coder reliability (ICR), this study uses Cohen's kappa formula to measure reliability among the first (myself) and the second coder. The first reason to use Cohen's kappa formula is that it helps to "measure agreement between two coders" indicating their level of agreement. Therefore, the author has used the following Cohen's kappa formula to measure the reliability of coding for each research question (see Table 1):

$$K=Po-Pe/1-Pe$$

Whereby:

P_o = "the relative observed agreement among coders"

P_e = "the hypothetical probability of chance agreement"

Another reason for using Cohen's kappa measure for evaluating the ICR is that the second coder has been chosen deliberately in this study and not randomly. As aforementioned, the second coder has done the transcription of interviews' and focus groups discussions' data. Also, the second coder has studied qualitative research methods at a postgraduate level in the country. Therefore, the author could professionally discuss the coding process and themes emerged from the transcribed texts with the second coder in order to ensure the consistency and to discuss any disagreement about the listed codes.

Furthermore, Cohen's kappa statistical results range between 0 and 1. In this study, statistics calculated by Cohen's kappa formula indicate that the data coded by both coders share a good level of agreement and consistency. Table, 1, below, explains the inter coder reliability for each research question in this study.

ICR Calculation using Cohen's kappa formula	ICR for research question one	ICR for research question two	ICR for research question three
Po calculation (observed agreement)	Total number of codes: 45 Both coders agree on 17 codes Both coders disagree on 19 codes 9 codes (i.e. related to physical assault by public; mob lynching during coverage of religious processions; threats by intelligence agencies) have not been included from the data-set of research question one as journalists has not provided any real life experience related to these codes and instead these issues have been highlighted by them quite generally. **Po= number in agreement =** (17+19/45)= 0.8	Total number of codes: 33 Both coders agree on 21 codes Both coders disagree on 9 codes 3 codes (i.e. threats from Taliban, army and husband) have not been included from the data-set of research question two due to incomplete and unclear sentences in journalists' responses) **Po=number in agreement=** (21+9/33)= 0.9	Total number of codes: 40 Both coders agree on 20 codes Both coders disagree on 14 codes 6 codes (i.e. related to impacts on journalists' marital lives, character assassination and bad family attitude) have been not been included from the data-set of research question three due to a lack of clarity in their responses and evidences shared from their real lives. **Po=number in agreement=** (20+14/40)= 0.8
Probability of agreement	Coder 1: clearly agrees on 25 listed codes (25/45=0.55 or 55%) Coder 2: clearly agrees on 20 codes (20/50=0.44 or 44%) Total: 0.55×0.44=0.24	Coder 1: clearly agrees on 20 listed codes (20/33=0.50 or 60%) Coder 2: clearly agrees on 23 codes (23/33=0.69 or 69%) Total: 0.60×0.69=0.41	Coder 1: clearly agrees on 12 listed codes (12/40=0.3 or 30%) Coder 2: clearly agrees on 23 codes (21/40=0.52 or 52%) Total: 0.3×0.5=0.1
Probability of disagreement	Coder 1: clearly disagrees on 20 codes (20/45=0.44 or 44%) Coder 2: clearly disagrees on 25 codes (25/45=0.55 or 55%) Total: 0.44×0.55=0.24	Coder 1: clearly disagrees on 3 codes (3/33=0.09 or 9%) Coder 2: clearly disagrees on 10 codes (10/33=0.30 or 30%) Total: 0.09×0.30=0.02	Coder 1: clearly disagrees on 9 codes (9/40=0.2% or 20%) Coder 2: clearly disagrees on 12 codes (12/40=0.3 or 30%) Total: 0.2×0.3=0.06
Pe= Overall probability of agreement between two coders	**Pe=0.24+0.24=0.48**	**Pe=0.41+0.02=0.42**	**Pe=0.1+0.06=0.16**
Cohen's kappa	Po-Pe/1-Pe 0.8-0.48/l-0.48=0.6	Po-Pe/1-Pe 0.9-0.4/1-0.4	Po-Pe/1-Pe 0.8-0.1/1.0.1

measure			
ICR	0.6= Slightly above average and moderate agreement	0.83=substantial agreement	0.7= above average agreement and more than moderate level

Table 1: Inter coder reliability calculation using Cohen's kappa formula

Thematic analysis

The data from in-depth interviews and focus groups discussions have been analysed thematically using key and sub-themes. The key themes have been derived from the research questions of this study and thus there are three key themes that underpin the thematic analysis, namely: (i) female journalists' lived experience of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination; (ii) Pakistan's journalism profession: sources of sexual harassment, threats and gender discrimination; (iii) impacts of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination on female journalists.

The thematic analysis, in this study, starts from the listing of initial significant statements relevant to each research questions and the overall focus of this study. Secondly, these listed statements have been segmented according to journalists' responses to each research question. Thirdly, journalists' responses have been coded in a manual coding book by two coders (i.e. the author and the second coder, who have done the transcription of qualitative data). Finally, the author has identified sub-themes that have been emerged 'inductively' from the interviews' and focus groups' coded data. These sub-themes have been classified on the basis of the prevalence of key-words in the journalists' responses to each research questions. And the prevalence of sub-themes has been decided on the basis of the number of journalists' responses in each sub-theme.

As aforementioned, interview and focus groups discussion data, in this study, have been analysed 'thematically'. This has required the quantification of the journalists' responses in each sub-theme. The use of numbers has facilitated to indicate the prevalence of different sub-themes across the data-set of all research questions. This study has relied on numbers in order to augment the thematic analysis of qualitative data. Qualitative research draws itself largely on the constructivist stance, which emphasizes the use of 'words' to describe the people's meanings, actions and experiences; therefore, the 'use of numbers' to interpret qualitative data is widely seen as contentious (Maxwell 2010; Sandelowski 2001, 230). However, the verbal quantification of data in qualitative studies (such as 'majority', 'many', 'most' and 'a few') needs the numerical power of numbers, which makes the interpretation of qualitative data more precise (Becker 1970). For example, Sandelowski et al. (2009, 2010) suggest that the use of numbers in qualitative research helps to recognize the emerging patterns "or otherwise to extract meaning from qualitative data, account for all data, and verify interpretations." Thus, in this study, the main rationale for using quantitative estimates for analyzing the qualitative data is to offer an approximate level of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination faced by Pakistani female journalists.

As far as validity of data is concerned, this study has used the method of *triangulation* that refers to the "observation of research problem from at least two different aspects" (Flick, 2000). In this study, data has been collected by using two qualitative methods including in-depth interviews and focus groups discussions (FGD) so as to ensure the validity.

Findings

Female journalists' lived experience of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination in Pakistan

This study reveals that a majority of Pakistani female journalists confront the challenges of verbal abuse within and outside of their media organizations, sexual harassment and gender discrimination (See Table 2). When analysing the interviews' and focus groups discussions' data comparatively, this study finds that the Pakistani journalists, who are working in mainstream television news channels, are suffering severely with these challenges as compared to those working in the country's mainstream newspapers. According to an interviewed female journalist from a local television news channel:

> Working environment of Pakistan's English and Urdu languages' newspapers is far better and decent than the television news channels. Verbal abuse by male colleagues is very common within some big media organizations and public do so on streets. I have faced sexual harassment once in a television news channel in early days of my career……It was a traumatic experience that had affected my ambition level to work as a journalist. However, my family encouraged me to switch job to another television news channel……Gender discrimination is another very common problem in both print and electronic media in Pakistan. If you belong to a rich background, you may have good opportunities to have career growth. Otherwise, girls from middle and lower-middle class families do face discrimination at the time of recruitment because of their economic background………….Unfortunately, female journalists are not paid equally too. The criteria of good pay-scale to female journalists, in many television news channels, is beauty and then influential family background…………………..Education and hard work have very limited value in Pakistan's media…………………Some Urdu language's newspapers are religiously conservative and you will never find a non-Muslim women working there because they are considered as modern or liberal in their attitude and dressing style. (Interviewee number 3)

Many Pakistani female journalists, particularly those working in television news channels, do face psychological and online abuse as well (See Table 2). "No one can feel good with constant online threats and abusive messages on Face Book and Twitter. We fear to speak about sexual harassment but such cases happen time and again in most of the media organizations of Pakistan", says a focus group participant from a local television news channel (Focus Group Participant I). Table 2, below, explains the female journalists' lived experience of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination in Pakistan (RQ1).

Key theme 1: Female journalists' lived experience of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination (RQ1)				
Sub-themes (RQ1)		**In-depth interview** **Number of journalists**	**Newspapers: Female focus group** **(Number of journalists)**	**Television news channels: Female focus group** **(Number of journalists)**
Sub-theme 1 (P=12)	Physical violence and attack	9 out of 25 (36%)	0 out of 8 (0%)	3 out of 8 (37%)
Sub-theme 2 (P=30)	Sexual harassment	17 out of 25 (68%)	5 out of 8 (62%)	8 out of 8 (100%)
Sub-theme 3 (P=25)	Psychological abuse	18 out of 25 (72%)	1 out of 8 (12%)	6 out of 8 (75%)
Sub-theme 4 (P=23)	Online threats and abuse	13 out of 25 (52%)	3 out of 8 (37%)	7 out of 8 (87%)
Sub-theme 5 (P=32)	Verbal abuse within media organization and outside	21 out of 25 (84%)	4 out of 8 (50%)	8 out of 8 (100%)

		In-depth interview Number of journalists	Newspapers: Female focus group (Number of journalists)	Television news channels: Female focus group (Number of journalists)
Sub-theme 6 (P=28)	Discrimination in recruitment and pay-scale	16 out of 25 (64%)	5 out of 8 (62%)	7 out of 8 (87%)
Sub-theme 7 (P=6)	Rape threat	6 out of 25 (24%)	0 out of 8 (0%)	0 out of 8 (0%)

Table 2: Female journalists' lived experience of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination

Interestingly, this study highlights that female journalists, either from newspapers and television news channels, do not face physical violence and attacks much (See Table 2). "Female journalists may face physical injuries when reporting from field, but male journalists experience physical assault and violence and life threats much more than us", states an interviewed journalist from an English language's newspaper (Interviewee number 2). Another noticeable finding is that none of the female journalists, who have participated in this study, talk about rape threats to them. A majority of interviewed female journalists (i.e. 19 out of 25) and all focus groups participants confirm that there is no widespread trend of rape threats to female journalists in Pakistan, but they did highlight a couple of rape incidents of female journalists in the Interior Sindh and Baluchistan areas.

Pakistan's journalism profession: Sources of sexual harassment, threats and gender discrimination

This study reveals three major sources of sexual harassment, threats and gender discrimination to Pakistani female journalists including media owner/or editor, male colleagues and religious organizations. Table 3, below, explains the sources of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination in Pakistan's journalism profession.

Key theme 2: Sources of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination (RQ2)				
Sub-themes (RQ2)		In-depth interview Number of journalists	Newspapers: Female focus group (Number of journalists)	Television news channels: Female focus group (Number of journalists)
Sub-theme 1 (P=36)	Boss (i.e. media owner and editor)	23 out of 25 (92%)	5 out of 8 (62%)	8 out of 8 (100%)
Sub-theme 2 (P=32)	Male colleagues	22 out of 25 (88%)	2 out of 8 (25%)	8 out of 8 (100%)
Sub-theme 3 (P=24)	Political parties	13 out of 25 (52%)	4 out of 8 (50%)	7 out of 8 87%)
Sub-theme 4 (P=30)	Religious organizations	17 out of 25 (68%)	5 out of 8 (62%)	8 out of 8 (100%)
Sub-theme 5 (P=20)	Public	5 out of 25 (20%)	7 out of 8 (87%)	8 out of 8 (100%)

Table 3: Sources of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination in Pakistan

A majority of interviewed journalists and focus groups participants, especially from television news channels, reveal how their bosses, male colleagues and people from religious organizations harass and target them (See Table 3). According to two focus group participants from a local television news channel and an Urdu language's newspaper:

> Most of the time bosses (including media owners, director news and editors) are involved in the cases of sexual harassment, apart from male colleagues. I have mostly worked as a news anchor in the Pakistani television news channels. I have switched job once because of harassment by my director news. I had the fear of losing my job and thus I never shared how

the director news used to sexually harass me……….I belong to a Pashtu family. While my family has allowed me to do job, they do feel concerned about what people say about my work as a journalist and a news anchor.…………….It is always tough to share the experience of sexual harassment because we live in a conservative and a male dominated society and people put all blame on the girl…….So, I thought it useless to share even with my female colleagues and I changed my job………..I feel sad to say that people with religious-mindset in Pakistan, who belong to religious organizations, do not pay respect to women in general and they behave very abusive towards female journalists. Islam does not teach this. However, people belonging to religious organizations do not threat women equally and discriminate them on the basis of their gender. (Focus Group Participant E)

This is first ever time I am sharing my experience of sexual harassment on the condition that my name will be kept anonymous……….I used to work as a news anchor in a reputable television news channel four years back. I was repeatedly harassed by my male colleague and even news producer and I used to receive wats app abusive messages by unknown people. I needed job because of the financial circumstances of my family; therefore, I compromised four years within such a pathetic and fearful environment. Finally, I got job in a newspaper and I am much happier now……….let me tell you that my Christian female colleague was physically harassed and verbally abused online several times by some religious organizations……….Discrimination and harassment on the basis of religion and ethnicity is very common in Pakistan's media. (Focus Group Participant A)

This study suggests that many female journalists, either belonging to newspapers and television news channels, have experienced sexual harassment and threats from political parties and the public in Pakistan (See Table 3). "Most Pakistani politicians, like a large proportion of public, do not pay respect to female journalists. They think them women of low characters ……..and hence they think it their right to do anything with them", says an interviewed journalist from an English-language's newspaper (Interviewee number 6). These findings are not surprising because of male dominance in the Pakistani society, low literacy rate, a lack of ethics and morality in the country's politicians' conduct and generally in the behaviour of illiterate people (See also UNESCO 2015).

Impacts of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination on female journalists

This study unpacks very apprehensive implications of sexual harassment, threats and gender discrimination for the female journalists in Pakistan. For example, a majority of interviewed journalists and focus groups' participants, who belong to television news channels, share that they suffer from psychological stress due to being constantly harassed, verbally abused (especially online through wats app and social media) and targeted on the basis of their gender (See Table 4). Reflecting upon the issue of psychological stress, an interviewed senior female news producer states:

Women journalists from print media are not suffering sexual harassment as badly as those working for television news channels. Many of my colleagues have complained about the stress they confront due to sexist slurs by their male colleagues and social media trolls. Then gender pay gap is also very evident. If you are beautiful, you may get salary more than competent male and female journalists. But everyone is not beautiful and we all have financial needs. There is no system of gender equality in terms of pay scale and promotions in Pakistan's news media. In newspapers, there is a

Wage Board Award that articulates the salary structure of journalists. However, it is hardly implemented by most of the newspapers. But still print media is better than the electronic media. I would say sexual harassment and gender discrimination is worst in television news channels.

Likewise, a female journalist from an English language's newspaper shares:

> I have suffered depression[iv] and anxiety a couple of years because of traumatic experience of online harassment. I used to receive abusive wats app messages from unknown numbers and threats of kidnapping on email. Being afraid, I refused to do some major investigative stories and my assignments were assigned to my male colleague then………….I belong to a Balochi family and it is not very common in Baloch culture for a girl to work as a journalist…….So, I had to face family pressure as well. In depression, I resigned my job and stayed at home for some time during 2017……..Eventually, my editor called me and encouraged to join back my work………Male journalists do face fatal threats mostly because of their investigative stories. Pakistan's female journalists are oppressed and victimised due to multiple factors including their gender, ethnic background and class. (Focus Group Participant C)

This study unpacks that many female journalists, particularly from television news channels, are compelled to do self-censorship to avoid harassment and threats (See Table 4). "It is better to seal the tongue instead of facing a lifetime trauma. Do you think a kidnapped or physically assault girl can survive in the Pakistani society with respect? No! Self-censorship is a safe way to practice journalism," says an interviewed female journalist from a television news channel (Interviewee number 11). Moreover, this study reveals that a number of female journalists, from television news channels, lose their jobs because of sexual harassment and discrimination. Table 4, below explains the impacts of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination on female journalists in Pakistan.

Key theme 3: Impacts of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination on female journalists (RQ3)				
Sub-themes (RQ3)		In-depth interview Number of journalists	Newspapers: Female focus group (Number of journalists)	Television news channels: Female focus group (Number of journalists)
Sub-theme 1 (P=36)	Psychological stress[v]	23 out of 25 (92%)	5 out of 8 (62%)	8 out of 8 (100%)
Sub-theme 2 (P=24)	Self-censorship	16 out of 25 (64%)	2 out of 8 (25%)	6 out of 8 (75%)
Sub-theme 3 (P=20)	Losing a job	13 out of 25 (52%)	0 out of 8 (0%)	7 out of 8 (87%)
Sub-theme 4 (P=28)	Losing an assignment	17 out of 25 (68%)	3 out of 8 (37%)	8 out of 8 (100%)
Sub-theme 5 (P=8)	Leaving or changing the profession	6 out of 25 (24%)	0 out of 8 (0%)	2 out of 8 (25%)

Table 4: Impacts of sexual harassment, threats and discrimination on female journalists in Pakistan

Unfortunately, the menace of sexual harassment and gender discrimination is depriving many talented women to pursue career as a journalist. "Misogyny; gender trolling; online abuse; and recruitment and pay-scale discrimination on the basis of looks, ethnicity, religion and class – these are warning signs for a girl to choose journalism as a career in Pakistan", underlines a female focus group participant from a television news channel (Focus Group Participant J). This study unpacks that female journalists, especially belonging to television

news channels, do not only lose their jobs and assignments, but it also affects their career in long-term. For example, a female journalist from a local television news channel shares her traumatic experience of multiple job losses and assignments. She says:

> In 2012, I started my journalism career as a junior reporter in a local television news channel, which is a middle-scale media organization in Pakistan. I had an ambition to work on-screen as a news anchor as well. Very soon, within four months of my appointment, I was offered to read news bulletin. I still feel traumatic to recall that experience because I could not say to anybody what I was suffering then. I used to be touched by my news producer unnecessary when having instructions about how to read news. On the other hand, camera men used to pass indecent remarks. I belong to a conservative Punjabi family and it was very hard for me to get permission to work as a journalist and news anchor. Finally, I decided to quit my first job. I had to wait five months to get appointed in a local English-language's fashion magazine. Now the biggest challenge there was discrimination. As I have mentioned, I belong to a conservative family and I usually wear Shalwar Qameez (i.e. the traditional attire of Pakistan). My female colleagues, who used to wear Western attires, used to have major assignments (including the coverage of leading fashion events in the country), and at times I had to do office work only. I was not satisfied with my situation and once again I decided to search job that could help me to polish my journalistic skills. You will surprise to know, it took almost eleven months to get a new job in a television news channel. It is a big news organization and much better in terms of pay-scale and delegation of assignments to female journalists. I would say that I could not pursue any journalism training or international fellowship because of this struggle, which has affected me mentally a lot. My ambition level has dropped considerably and I really need motivation to get back to my ambition of pursuing journalism fellowships and trainings nationally and internationally. (Interviewee number 21)

While this study indicate that some female journalists are compelled to either change or quit the journalism profession, there are many other Pakistani female journalists (either from newspapers and television news channels), who are resilient enough to combat with the challenges of sexual harassment and discrimination and they do not prefer to change their profession (See Table 4, Sub-theme 5).

Discussion

Career-related challenges are commonly faced by men and women across the globe. However, being a journalist in the current times is not an easy job because it is one of a few unsafe careers in many countries of the world (Carlsson and Poyhatri 2017). The safety of journalists is one of the challenges that all media houses face in Pakistan. The country's journalists live in a society that feels free to violate, intimidate, harass and assault them (Jamil 2017a, 2017b). In the past decade, more females have entered the Pakistani journalism profession, which has increased their exposure to all forms of harassment, discrimination, fear and favour (Rehmat 2017). Most Pakistani journalists face a daily task of producing exclusive and breaking news pieces with the challenges and risks present in each situation. This task is not easy for both male and female journalists. However, females are more vulnerable to a society that is ridden with conservatism, religious extremism, crime and gender discrimination. This study also manifests that Pakistan's female journalists, peculiarly belonging to television news channels, face a relentless barrage of sexual harassment, online and offline verbal abuse and gender discrimination. While sharing their experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination, two participants of focus group

discussion, who work for television news channels as reporters for political and business beats respectively, state:

> I do political reporting in a local television news channel and I have worked as a news anchor as well. I feel sad to share that my news producer and camera men often send sexist remarks on my face book and wats app. They do so with my other female colleagues as well. No one likes to work in such an ill environment. I am compelled to continue my job because of my financial circumstances and above all I do not want to quit my profession. (Focus Group Participant I)

> Many female journalists do not speak about their experiences of sexual harassment because no one accepts a woman's statement in Pakistan. We live in a culturally conservative and religiously extremist society – where women are blamed for everything. Why don't you wear Burqa or Hijab (veil) if feel unsafe or harassed? Such statements come from religious leaders, misogynists and even women of conservative mind-set……………..I acknowledge that Burqa (veil) is part of Pakistan's ethnic cultures (especially in Pashtu, Baloch and conservative Punjabi and Urdu-speaking families), and many women do wear it with their choice as well. However, one must not ignore that many girls are forced to wear it so that to be saved from sexual harassment, sexist slurs and men's street remarks and many people do see it as a symbol of oppression in Pakistan……………….Just take the example of Meesha Shafi's case. She is a famous Pakistani singer - who has alleged a male singer Ali Zafar for sexual harassment. Now she is facing social media troll, online misogyny and even she has been labelled as a #MeToo campaigner in Pakistan………..No one bothers to think about her psychological trauma as a woman………………………. It is said that Pashtun or Baloch families are conservative and they do not allow girls to come in media industry. Let me tell you that women from Punjabi and Sindhi cultures too face restrictions for pursuing career as a journalist in Pakistan ……………..Gender disparity has spread in our society like a plague………….Often female journalists are not paid equally as their work is considered as inferior to male journalists. Then many female journalists face recruitment issues if they are not pretty or they belong to a middle or lower-middle class background …………and non-Muslim females are not hired in some rightist media organizations. (Focus Group Participant K)

From the perspective of *intersectionality*, it is clearly evident that the Pakistani female journalists have multiple identity components (based on their ethnicity, religion and class) and they do face oppression and discrimination on the basis of their identities. Moreover, as quoted by a focus group participant above (Participant K), people with religious mind-set view Hijab (veil) as way to protect women from harassment in Pakistan. On the contrary, many Pakistanis view it as a symbol of oppression rather than a protection from harassment. Postcolonial feminist, Abu-Lughod, provides a thoughtful analysis of the veiling debate. "Rather than the universal symbol of oppression that many Western assume it to be, the Burqa or Hijab (veil) is a Pashtun garment and there can be empowerment in it – one anthropologist describes it as portable seclusion" (Papanek, quoted in Abu-Lughod 2002, 785). While Abu-Lughod disagrees with any enforcement of the wearing of Burqa (veil), she notices that many women wear these outfits voluntarily and have no wish to discard them. I think this is somehow the case of Pakistan.

This study reveals that sexual harassment is a sensitive issue and those affected may feel unable to report the matter or lodge a formal grievance because of societal conservatism and religious extremism in Pakistan. Sexual and workplace harassment is a grave issue. There are many Pakistani laws commissioned to deal issues of: *women's physical assault* (Section 354 A, Pakistan Penal Code 1860); *forced physical intercourse and sexual relations* (Section 366 A. Pakistan Penal Code 1860); *insult and public harassment* (sections 509 and 510, Pakistan Penal Code 1860); *sexual harassment, verbal abuse and threats at workplace*

(Section 509, Pakistan Penal code 1860); *false accusation against a female* (Section 496 C, Pakistan Penal Code 1860); *workplace harassment* (Workplace Harassment Act 2010).[vi] Notwithstanding these legal protections, sexual harassment and threats to women is very common in the Pakistani news media and the existing laws are practically ineffective.

While the country's media regularly reports the incidents of sexual violence, harassment and rape, this study highlights that it is "rare to find news reports" on female journalists' experience of sexual harassment and rape in Pakistan. A key point in intersectional scholarship is the argument that the women of colours are usually unseen as rape victims as compared to the white women (Jackson 2013; MacKenzie and Marcel 2009; Stabile 2006; Crenshaw 1993). In the light of this argument, the case of Pakistan is very complicated because not all women are invisible as rape or sexual harassment victims in the media reports, but ethnicity and class do play a role in the media reporting on rape and sexual violence. "Incidents of sexual violence in Sindhi feudal families, Pashtun and Baloch tribal areas are at times censored because journalists face threats. Unfortunately, it is rare to find media reports if any female journalist is sexually harassed within media organization", says an interviewed journalist from a television news channel (Interviewee number 13).

Furthermore, as the internet becomes an increasingly important part of human existence, a woman's inability to feel safe online is an impediment to her freedom, as well as to her basic human rights. The problem of online violence and harassment is often overlooked in discussions of violence against women. Some recent studies have revealed that women journalists face the threat of online harassment, which can be different from what male journalists experience as it can target them based on their gender or sexuality. This harassment, malicious sexist attacks reflect the experiences of many women in general online (Chen and Pain 2017; Edstrom 2016; Ging and Norman 2016; Chess and Shaw 2015; Cole 2015).

In the case of Pakistan, this study mirrors that online abuse and harassment is a routine experience of female journalists, either working for newspapers or television news channels, and they face an endless stream of abuse in real time (see Sub-theme 4, Table 2). With the recent #MeToo movements worldwide, more people are holding discussions around the topics of sexism, gender inequality, sexism and misogyny in Pakistan perhaps because earlier these challenges were structuring 'offline' and now these have been transferred online in different labels like 'online misogyny', 'cyber-bullying', 'online harassment and sexism'. While there are limited studies to conclude that misogyny has increased after the internet era (Yarrow 2018), it may be argued that the digital space has facilitated, if not amplified, misogynistic behaviours. From comments on news stories to Face book posts to Twitter comments to YouTube videos and memes, misogyny on the internet has taken diverse forms. While women from all walks of lives are affected by online misogyny in Pakistan, female journalists and media celebrities are facing daily harassment because of the nature of their work, which requires their internet presence. The "anonymity nature of the internet" has also emerged as one of the major challenges in "combating online sexism". With regard to online harassment, a female journalist from an Urdu-language newspaper states, "it is hard to find the actual culprits as many people post comments on social media sites using fake accounts…… anonymity nature of the internet is a big challenge to combat online sexism and harassment" (Interviewee number 12).

For Pakistan's female journalists, the challenges don't stop here. According to a recent report, "less than 5 percent of journalists in Pakistan are women" (See Rehmat 2017), which raises serious questions about how Pakistan's news media can reflect and inform public

opinion when the country's news organizations are so unrepresentative of the society it serves. Female journalists' feedbacks, in this study, also confirm that Pakistan's female journalists face discrimination at various grounds including their ethnicity, religion and class (i.e. socio-economic background). According to a senior news producer from a local television news channel:

> Let me list up major issues. You may face problems in recruitment generally, if you belong to a middle or lower middle class family. Girls, who wear head scarf or do Hijab (Veil), can face some challenges in most of the television news channels and leftist (liberal) newspapers because then they may not have field assignments and on-screen jobs. Non-Muslim girls and those from liberal Muslim families are usually not hired in rightist (religious) media organizations. Another problem is of pay-scale that is not uniform. Male journalists are often paid more and mostly prettier female news anchors are paid higher than other female reporters………..Discrimination also occurs in terms of job assignment. Female journalists are not usually assigned stories related to national security, judiciary, government's and military's affairs. (Interviewee number 7)

This study indicates a gender pay gap, even when women are more qualified and experienced than their male colleagues. For example, an interviewed female journalists highlights, "I have done Masters in Media Studies and I have eleven years of experience as a political reporter. My salary is far lesser than the newly appointed male host of a political talk show, who is just graduate in Science (BSC)" (Interviewee number 8). A joint report by International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), UNESCO and UNWomen also suggest that in Asia Pacific "Cambodia and Pakistan had the widest gender pay gap with men earning much higher salaries" (UNESCO 2015, 21). Between a lack of safe working environment and any equality policy, prejudice of male journalists, and a refusal to offer women the opportunity to report the beats they prefer by media owners, Pakistan's female journalists present a picture of antiquated, male-dominated journalism institution where women's presence in the newsroom is seen as a novelty at best and a threat to existing powers at worst (See also Siddique, 2015; UNESCO 2015, 23). These findings call upon for further research into gender equality in Pakistan's news media, revealing details about how they suffer professionally and financially due to gender discrimination.

The participating female journalists, especially those who work for television news channels, underlines that sexual harassment and discrimination often comes from within their own media outlets and is most likely to be perpetrated by their immediate boss and male colleagues (See Table 3). This study reveals detrimental impacts of these challenges on female journalists' professional and personal lives in Pakistan (See Table 4). A majority of participating journalists, who belong to television news channels, suggest that they suffer from psychological stress by virtue of working in a threatening and prejudiced environment (See sub-theme 1, Table 4). Many of them suffer by losing an assignment or job and they are compelled to practice self-censorship due to threats. However, this study highlights a very good resilience level of the Pakistani female journalists as majority of them (either from newspapers and television news channels) continue to struggle with challenges instead of quitting their profession (See Table 4, Sub-theme 5).

Pakistan's news media has witnessed massive expansion during the past fifteen years, which has provided space to women journalists to enter into the journalism profession. Nevertheless, this study manifests that women journalists still strive to have their space at management positions, to combat sexual harassment and other online and offline threats (See also Rehmat 2017a; Siddiqui 2015). This indicates that the multiplicity of news media outlets

is not playing any role to facilitate gender equality and safety in Pakistan's journalism landscape. However, in the wake of the global #MeToo movement, the issues of sexual harassment and gender discrimination are now gaining public's, media organizations' and government's attention in Pakistan. This can facilitate somehow a safe working environment and better opportunities for local female journalists to work more in current affairs and at leading management positions, resulting in their ability to influence government's level policies and their better representation in public's debates.

Conclusion

Postcolonial feminists insist on recognising the lives and experiences of women in contexts completely different from those of women in the West (Petersen and Rutherford 1986; Spivak 1988; Mohantay and Toress 1991; Brah 1996; Abu-Lughod 2002; Mohantay 2004; Santesso 2013). For instance, Pakistan shares a colonial past with India and Bangladesh. While these countries have inherited many Western ways and ideas, the practice of those ideas is not without problems (Jayawardena 1994). The Western concepts of 'safety', 'freedom' and 'equality' are contested in postcolonial countries such as Pakistan, especially when it comes to women's rights and their living experience. Notwithstanding emancipation from colonial oppression, Pakistan's society is still conservative and does not respect women's rights to safety, freedom and to make their own choices within and outside the home.

This study highlights a clear relationship between intersectionality and sexual harassment against female journalists in Pakistan. The country's women journalists have multiple identity components based on their gender, class, ethnicity and religion, and they are abused and oppressed on these grounds. The main reasons for their oppression are no doubt Pakistan's well entrenched conservatism, religious extremism and patriarchal culture. Notwithstanding the quandary of sexual harassment, online abuse and discrimination, this study reveals that the Pakistani female journalists are resilient enough to fight against these challenges as a majority of them continue their profession (see Table 4).

While #MeToo campaign has gained some momentum in Pakistan that provides courage to the Pakistani women and female journalists to speak against sexual harassment and discrimination they face, much more is needed to achieve broader impacts of it. One possible solution is to replicate the Western #MeToo rhetoric and to apply it to the literate circles of the society. Nevertheless, this would not benefit to a large proportion of the Pakistani women who are neither literate enough to understand the Western feminist rhetoric not they are familiar with their rights and with what constitutes sexual harassment and abuse. For having a grass-root level's impact, another option is to customize the #MeToo movement keeping in view local context and cultural nuances of the Pakistani society. This means introducing sex education programmes at higher secondary school level, launching gender safety awareness programmes in both rural and urban areas, and facilitating a culture of respect towards women in general through mutual efforts of public, media, government's and non-government's organizations. Though these solutions may be tough to implement due to widespread conservatism and religious extremism of the Pakistani society, but #MeTOO campaign can be adapted bearing in mind Pakistan's cultural sensitivities and societal pressure for effective outcomes.

Last but not least, this study invokes Pakistani female journalists to train themselves on how to handle sexual and online harassment and to back them up after it happens. This also requires local universities and journalists' unions to offer professional development courses to include training about how to handle threats, sexual and online harassments. Atop, Pakistan's female journalists need to speak up publicly with courage to report on their personal experience of abuse, sexual harassment and discrimination. This shall help to develop gendered journalistic practices and a more vocal and representative journalism institution in Pakistan.

Acknowledgments

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End Notes

[i] "Sexual harassment is defined by law and includes requests for sexual favors, sexual advances or other sexual conduct when (1) submission is either explicitly or implicitly a condition affecting academic or employment decisions; (2) the behaviour is sufficiently severe or pervasive as to create an intimidating, hostile or repugnant environment; or (3) the behaviour persists despite objection by the person to whom the conduct is directed." https://www.un.org/womenwatch/uncoordination/antiharassment.html

[ii] "Discrimination is any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social origin or other status. Discrimination may be an isolated event affecting one person or a group of persons similarly situated, or may manifest itself through harassment or abuse of authority." https://www.un.org/womenwatch/uncoordination/antiharassment.html

[iii] **Purposive sampling** refers to the "selection of certain groups or individuals for their relevance to the issue being studied" (Gray, Williamson, Karp and Dalphin, 2007: 105). The rationale for using purposive sampling, in this study, is to ensure the representation of male and female journalists from Pakistan's most influential Urdu and English-languages' newspapers and television news channels.

[iv] "**Depression**, in psychology, a mood or emotional state that is marked by feelings of low self-worth or guilt and a reduced ability to enjoy life. A person who is depressed usually experiences several of the following symptoms: feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or pessimism; lowered self-esteem and heightened self-depreciation; a decrease or loss of ability to take pleasure in ordinary activities; reduced energy and vitality; slowness of thought or action; loss of appetite; and disturbed sleep or insomnia" (Encyclopedia Britannica: https://www.britannica.com/science/depression-psychology)
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[v] By definition, stress is any uncomfortable "emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological and behavioral changes" (Baum 1990)

[vi] See laws details at: http://stopharassmentnow.org/women-sexual-harassment-laws-pakistan/