

# Women Journalists in Tamilnadu: A study on the Socio Economic Background

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**Abstract:** Indian women have seen a rapid shift from confining at home to occupying higher positions in the society in various industries. Women are armed with perfect qualifications and skills that seek careers in a number of fields. In the past three decades women have made a consistent mark in media industry. In the diverse environment of media, women have covered print, television, radio, new media and every other form of media. In any investigation, discussing about the socio economic background of the respondents becomes an essential part. It brings the social composition of the respondents and it helps to view the identity of the respondents. The present study quantitatively throws light on the socio economic background of the print media women journalists in Tamilnadu. The socio economic background includes age, marital status, qualification, experience, type of family, native place and professional background. Data are explained in the form of tables followed by interpretations.

**Key Words:** women journalists, socio economic profile, print media.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

In the past, women were mostly meant to be at home and their place was kitchen. The position and status of women were and are inferior to male members of the society.. The development of patriarchal society made women weaker, her roles are more for procreation and attending the household chores. After World War II, number of women entering work force increased. In 1990, one-third of the labor force was covered by female. In 2000, International Labor organization reported that women constitute half of the work force. This entry of the work force happened because of the yearning to contribute for the welfare of the family and the self-satisfaction. History of press concluded that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, women entered journalism. Women are latecomers to the media profession because of the social and religious taboos. But at this juncture of economic development, women play an important part in media. Though journalism is considered to be a taboo for Indian women, women journalists are slowly accepted in the field and by the society. Entry of private TV channels increased the percentage of women media professionals. Journalism was once meant to be a male profession. Female journalists are not encouraged to join journalism. But today, women are employed in journalism and we could see newspaper owners, reporters, editors and journalists. In magazines, women journalists who deal with various issues of children and women are very successful. The skill for analyzing issues such as women abuse, harassment of women, female infanticide is given importance. More than newspapers, magazine deal these issues in depth and women are considered to be capable for handling such stories. With this, journalism is not a male domain now. A newspaper 'Khabar Lahariya' turned out to be a successful newspaper which was run by eight women from the Bundelkhand region. The newspaper is funded by an NGO having an aim to encourage and inspire women to fight for their rights.

It is to be noted that, more young graduates are pursuing journalism diploma and degree courses having an ambition to prove themselves in the profession. A good proportion of the young graduates are female. Female reporters are given only human interest and health stories while men covered politics. In the stories covered, men are cited as expert and are sourced more frequently. For covering stories, reporters choose source from other reporters. Female reporters reach out to female sources for human interest and lifestyle stories; and male reporters for hard stories. In India, female work participation is low when compared to other countries. In media jobs, number of women employed in electronic media is more than in print media. Along with the employment, factors that help to improve the status of modern society are age, marital status, qualification, experience, state they belong to, mother tongue, type of family, family background and income. With this background, it is mandatory to analyze the socio economic profile of the print media women journalists in Tamilnadu.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

**World Association of Christian Communication** (2001) carried out a study on women journalists and found that in the last five years, number of women journalists employed has decreased by 2 percent. It was 43 percent in 1995 whereas it is 41 percent currently. It is evident that women do not contribute a significant part of media industry. **UNESCO** (2003) conducted a case study on the status of women in media organizations in Canada, Egypt, Ecuador, Nigeria and India. It was found that the growth of media organization is not complemented by the growth of women

participation. Women are a minority presence. **Kharel, Beena** (2005) who reported on the women and conflict reporting in Nepal found that the membership federation of Nepalese journalists had less than 5% of women. There is not even a single woman journalist in the online news service run by a private sector. In major newspapers published from Kathmandu, women journalists constitute an average of 5.8%. But their participation in radio and FM stations are comparatively better. Particularly in FM stations, it is 37%.

**Gallagher** (1995) reported that in Japan, 8 percent of women were part of media jobs. In India, 12 percent of women were part of media jobs. But in the study conducted in 2011, it showed that the workforce of women had occupied double the percentage of media jobs. In Japan it was 15 percent and in India it was 25 percent. **Hossain** (1998) from his study reported that in Bangladesh women journalists were very few in number. In the National Press Club, among the 470 members, only 15 were women. Dhaka city based reporters' telephone directory has listed only 3 women reporters among the 366 reporters.

**Suzanne Franks** (2013) investigated 'Is there still a gender bias in journalism' and concluded that women outnumber men in journalism training and enter the profession in a slightly greater numbers. A study by **Begum, Shahnaj** (2005) found that, in Bangladesh, the presence of women in media is less than 6%. Though Bangladeshi women have their feet in other professions like politics, finance, and judicial system, they do not enjoy the same freedom in media. The **international federation of journalists'** (2001) survey found that number of women journalists were in a rise in most of the countries surveyed. An average percentage of women journalists were 38 percent.

An audit was conducted by **Gender Links and South African National Editors Forum** (2006) among men and women in South African newsrooms. It was found that men and women are equal in number in newsroom. **Ayis** (2003) did a qualitative study of media in Mozambique and found that women are underrepresented in the Mozambique's print media. In few newspapers such as Domingo, Sunday Newspaper, Independent zambeze, there were no women journalists. Other newspapers had a maximum of only one or two women.

A study by **Eapen, K.E** (1988) found that, in Delhi, 13 out of 72 students employed in journalism were women. Of the 13 women, 11 of them were below 40 years of age which reflects that a larger part of young women were getting into the field. **Balasubramanya** (2005) studied 835 journalists who work in newspapers and magazines around India spreading across 14 states. It was found that only 20.12% were women. **Gutierrez** (2008) quoted the report of Moniak Djerf-Pierra 'The Gender of Journalism' that Sweden, which is a female-friendly nation, still remains male-dominated in the journalism sphere. In Sweden, 3 out of 4 leaders in the media industry are men.

### 3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the socio-economic background of the print media women journalists in Tamilnadu.

### 4. METHODOLOGY:

The study adopted quantitative research method involving an in-depth interview among 120 journalists working with the leading English and Tamil newspapers. Respondents were chosen through purposive random sampling method to include eligible sample in the study. Based on the resources available, geographical area and number of respondents were chosen for the study. Primary data were collected from the respondents using a structured questionnaire where the questions were about the demographic variables age, marital status, qualification, experience, state they belong to, mother tongue, type of family, family background and income. The literature inferences support the status of women in print media. The respondents comprised of editors, sub- editors, reporters, Correspondents, in print media.

### 5. DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS :

#### Age structure of the Respondents:

Age is considered as an important factor. It is the period of the person's life. The table below describes the age of the respondents. It reveals that out of the total 120 respondents 48.3% of journalists belong to the age group of 20-29 years where 28.3% belong to the age group of 30-39. 13.3% of journalists belong to the age group of 40-50 and the remaining 10% are above fifty years of age. It is clearly seen from the table that in print media, youngsters are more. As the age increases, percentage of women in media decreases. This is may be because of the entry of electronic media which has flagged way for youngsters. It is also to be noted that, women above age 50 are still working in print media.

Age group of the respondents

| Age          | Number of respondents | Percentage  |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 20-29        | 58                    | 48.3%       |
| 30-39        | 34                    | 28.3%       |
| 40-50        | 16                    | 13.3%       |
| 50+          | 12                    | 10%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>120</b>            | <b>100%</b> |

### Educational qualification of the respondents

For the development of nation, education plays a vital role. In India, for centuries together, because of the social stigma, women are deprived of education. In modern days, women started to get equal education just like men. Doors which were once closed for women, are now opened. Education brought women, employment in various sectors. This has made women stronger, independent and self-sustained. The literacy rate of women, was only 0.7 per cent according to the census report of 1901. In 2001, the literacy rate was increased to 53.67%. In 2011, the literacy rate has raised upto 65.46%. The rise shows the growth of the socio economic condition of women in India as well.

The table below labels the education level of the respondents. 38.3% of the respondents have completed post-graduation in various arts, science and professional streams. 44.1% of the respondents have completed under graduation from different departments. 17.5% of the respondents have done P.G Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication. A point to be noted here is that, 47.5% of journalists have graduated from media department.

**Educational qualification of the respondents**

| Education    | Number of respondents | Percentage  |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| PG Diploma   | 21                    | 17.5%       |
| PG           | 46                    | 38.3%       |
| UG           | 53                    | 44.16%      |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>120</b>            | <b>100%</b> |

### Designation of the respondents

Depending on the organization, designation varies for the same kinds of work performed. Respondents were of reporters, sub editors, chief sub editor, senior sub editor, principal correspondents, news correspondent, assistant editor, and editors. The table below shows that 20% of the respondents are reporters, 40% of the respondents are sub editors, 6.6% of the respondents are chief sub editors, 8.3% of the respondents are senior sub editors, 10% of the respondents are principal correspondents, 7.5% of the respondents are news correspondents, 5% of the respondents are assistant editor and 2.5% of the respondents are editors. It is to be noticed that a vast number of women journalists are part of desk jobs. A good number of women have also entered the field of reporting covering various beats that were once meant for men.

**Designation of the respondents**

| Designation              | Number of respondents | Percentage  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Reporters                | 24                    | 20%         |
| Senior Reporters         | 16                    | 13.3%       |
| Sub editors              | 32                    | 26%         |
| Chief sub editor         | 8                     | 6.6%        |
| Senior sub editor        | 10                    | 8.3%        |
| Principal correspondents | 12                    | 10%         |
| News correspondent       | 9                     | 7.5%        |
| Assistant editor         | 6                     | 5%          |
| Editors                  | 3                     | 2.5%        |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>120</b>            | <b>100%</b> |

### Marital status of the Respondents

A significant variable to analyze the socio economic profile of the respondents is, marital status. It helps for analyzing dual role of working women, domestic work, child care and family responsibilities. The table below displays the marital status of the respondents. 57.5% of the respondents are unmarried, 26.6% of them are married, 5.8% of the respondents are divorced and the remaining 10% did not reveal the marital status. The results reveals that unmarried women are more in the profession.

**Marital status of the Respondents**

| Marital Status | Number of respondents | Percentage  |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Unmarried      | 69                    | 57.5%       |
| Married        | 32                    | 26.6%       |
| Divorced       | 7                     | 5.8%        |
| Did not reveal | 12                    | 10%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>120</b>            | <b>100%</b> |

### Family type of the respondents

Another factor for determining the socio-economic status is, family. It is the cultural institution to impart values and norms to people. Family is categorized as joint family and nuclear family. Joint family has members related to each other by generations. Nuclear family includes just husband, wife and children. The table below shows that 93.3% of the respondents are in nuclear families and 6.6% of the respondents are in joint families. Due to modernization, majority of the people are preferring nuclear families.

**Family type of the respondents**

| Family type  | Number of respondents | Percentage  |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Nuclear      | 112                   | 93.3%       |
| Joint        | 8                     | 6.6%        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>120</b>            | <b>100%</b> |

### Professional background

Professional background of the respondents is also an important factor to analyze the socio economic background. The table below describes the experience, women journalists have in media field through work and internship. 47.5% of the respondents, have specialized some course in media field. 53.3% have had internship experience in different media field. The results show that women journalists have taken the profession seriously and are specialized in the field.

### Native Place of the Respondents

Native place is also an other factor for assessing the geographical distribution of the respondents. The table below displays the native place of the respondents. Majority (74.1%) of the respondents are from Tamilnadu. They belong to different districts of Tamilnadu state such as Madurai, Chennai, Trichy, Coimbatore, and Tirunelveli. 25.8% of the respondents belong to state outside Tamilnadu. They belong to states such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Delhi. Tamilnadu has encouraged women to prove in a male dominated profession.

**Native Place of the Respondents**

| Native Place | Number of respondents | Percentage  |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Tamilnadu    | 89                    | 74.1%       |
| Outside T.N  | 31                    | 25.8%       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>120</b>            | <b>100%</b> |

## 6. CONCLUSION:

The paper analysed the socio-economic background of the print media women journalists, Tamilnadu. The background information such as age, marital status, qualification, experience, type of family, native place and professional background. Based on the percentage analysis, it was found that, more number of young women are part of the journalism profession and women who are over 50 years of age are also in the profession. Mostly, women are assigned desk jobs. Majority of the women who are in the profession are unmarried. Internship experience has helped women survive in the field. Tamilnadu has served as a good platform for women journalists. Thus this study analysed the socio-economic background of print media women journalists in Tamilnadu.

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