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Problems Faced By Women Journalists

By

Rokiah Bte Abdul Kaoir
Problems faced by women journalists in my country.

If you expect problems pertaining to sexual harassment and other form of discrimination in my country within the journalistic profession then I may sound disappointing.

I can't think of any such problems. Of course you do get complaints of an odd editor making snide remarks on the capabilities of their women peers but such occasions are rare and indeed I really can't think of one instance which had acted as a set-back for women in the profession.

On the contrary the opposite sex has been made to eat humble pie with the outstanding achievements of some of our women journalists. Since its inception in 1982 two women have won the prestigious Journalist of the Year award in the English section. Considering the number of women journalists in my country, particularly in terms of seniority, the achievement is satisfactory.

In fact, women journalists has time and again won various Fellowships and awards for their excellence and incisive work in the field of journalism. Some of them after a stint in local dailies have also went onto work with international journals of repute and regional magazines.

Names like Adibah Amin, Suhaini Azman, Cheyrl Dorall, Halinah Todd, Rosnah Majid and Supriya Singh have not only brought recognition to women folk in the realm of journalism but also respect to the profession.

Today, in my country the female sex is very much entrenched into the profession. You find them in every area of journalism - in the various fields - like politics, economic, financial, general, features, sports, entertainment to sub-editing, to positions of leader writers and news editors.

In fact, you will be surprised that the biggest problem facing the women in our profession is the women themselves. Many of you, particularly those from my country, may not agree with my view.

But I have seen some of the problems stemmed from their own lack of courage and initiative. If there is one reason why the Malaysian women are lagging in the profession, it may be due to their own lack of initiative. I would term it as "A poverty of spirit."

Often I come across women journalists who are too dependent on the editors. They seldom take the initiative to look for possible stories and angles. Most of the time they expect their editors to assign them for a task. This is not what journalism is all about.

The editors also expect some ideas, creativity and contribution from the journalists. If you are one who belongs to the passive group that depends on the editor for assignments then obviously you are not going to make much headway.

Many women treat journalism as a 9-5 job. That by itself is a mistake. In journalism as you know we have to work odd hours just to meet deadlines or cover events that occur at unearthly hours that requires us to be on the beat.

In short, rigid working schedule is out. The women journalists must indoctrinate themselves that in journalism, the only occasion one keep a watch on the time is when one is in hurry to meet a deadline.

For long the uncertain working hours itself was a deterrence for women hoping to venture into journalism. Today, faced with the reality of unemployment even among the ranks of university graduates, many have opted for journalism by accident rather than design.

Their minds hence are not on the profession as they see it as a stepping stone for greener pastures. This then is another problem facing the industry. Job-hopping - among women journalists.

Often after less than five years they go on to work in the PR industry.
There is nothing wrong in it as humankind since time immemorial has been leading a nomadic life, so speak, always on the lookout for greener pasture. But such an attitude do have its negative effects too. They perpetuate an image of temporariness. And does not augur well for the majority of women journalists as they are viewed with a jaundiced eye by the management. Even then there is no discrimination when it comes to promotion or intake. Women journalists despite their own inherent weaknesses continue to enjoy some respect and dignity in the profession.

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