WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN LOCAL MEDIA
MAJOR STRUGGLES AND PROPOSALS FOR SOLUTIONS

Authors
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Special Thanks to all female journalists who contributed to this study by sharing their experiences.

“This report has been prepared with the financial support of the European Union within the framework of ETKİNİZ EU Programme. The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the Media Research Association (MEDAR) and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union”
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WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN LOCAL MEDIA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BİK</td>
<td>Basın İlan Kurumu - Press Advertising Authority</td>
</tr>
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<td>CEİD</td>
<td>Cinsiyet Eşitliği İzleme Derneği - Association for Monitoring Gender Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPI</td>
<td>IPI- International Press Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSGM</td>
<td>KSGM - Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık Kadın Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü - Republic of Turkey, Prime Minister’s Office, Directorate General of Women’s Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIZ</td>
<td>MEDIZ- Medya İzleme Grubu - Media Monitoring Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWC</td>
<td>PWC- PricewaterhouseCoopers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEPAV</td>
<td>TEPAV- Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı - Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGC</td>
<td>TGC- Türkiye Gazeteciler Cemiyeti - Journalists’ Association of Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGS</td>
<td>TGS- Türkiye Gazeteciler Sendikası - Journalists’ Union of Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>TÜİK</td>
<td>TÜİK- Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu - Turkish Statistics Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>UNDP- United Nations Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEF</td>
<td>WEF - World Economic Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMTN</td>
<td>WMTN- Who Makes The News</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

“Gender equality”, a fundamental human right, is essentially based on the concept of “gender” which incorporates the roles, behaviors and conditions that are considered acceptable for men and women in a society and thus associated with socially-constructed genders, and aims to ensure that all individuals can exist, be represented and actively participate in all domains of social life on equal basis without being discriminated against (UN, 1979; UNDP, 2018; ILO, 2018). This principle ensures that every individual is included in economic, political, cultural and social domains on equal terms regardless of their gender, and is also protected by international documents, conventions and legislation on human rights in Turkey.

Although there is a legal framework to guarantee gender equality in Turkey, women are often subjected to various forms of gender-based discrimination in all domains of social life (UNDP, 2018). One of these domains is professional life (TEPAV, 2018; ILO, 2018; PWC, 2018). Turkey has been listed in the 130th place among 149 counties in terms of gender equality, according to the Gender Inequality Report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2020). The report offers an analysis of listed countries on the basis of various criteria (i.e., social equality of opportunities, access to health care and educational services by women and empowering women in political life) and it underlines the prevalence of gender-based discrimination in Turkey which specifically prohibits women from participating in economic life (WEF, 2020). Similarly, the data published by Turkish Statistics Institute (TÜİK) demonstrate that, despite representing almost half of the nation’s population, Turkish women’s participation in the labor force (34.5%) is well below men’s (71.8%) (TÜİK, 2019). Studies reveal that women are faced with various forms of gender-based discrimination beyond the processes of recruitment and entrance to the professional sector, including informal employment, inequality in promotions and wages, unfair workload and working hours (ILO, 2018; PWC, 2018).

Media is one of the business sectors where women experience the highest level of gender inequality (TGC, 2016; CEID, 2018). Turkish women first entered the media sector in 1950s (Asker, 1990; Karaman, 2006). The number of media organizations and schools of journalism saw a rise during that time, expanding the professional capacity and impact area of journalism and paving the way for women’s employment in this sector (Karaman, 2006; Dursun, 2010). The women’s movement, gaining global traction during the 1970s, was also influential in Turkey in early 1980s. In this era, the representation of women in journalism as well as other business sectors saw a boost (Dursun, 2010). During the same decade, the media sector was proliferated with fledgling magazines and television channels, which also created new employment and specialization areas for women journalists (Asker, 1990; Timisi, 1996). There was a remarkable increase in the number of women in journalism and in the media, as new forms of publications and broadcasting shows for women were introduced, resulting in a significant improvement in women’s visibility in the media (Karaman, 2006). By 1990s, women were actively working in various branches of journalism, and more and more women executives’ names appeared in the mastheads on newspapers (Karaman, 2006). The increased professional visibility of women in journalism continued in various positions and areas of specialization during 2000s, which was further strengthened with the rise of digital media platforms (MEDIZ, 2008).

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (Article 10 & 41)
Act No. 6284 dated 8 March 2012 to Protect Family and Prevent Violence against Women(2012)
The Legislation for the Establishment of Human Rights And Equality Institution of Turkey(2016)
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)(1948)
European Convention of Human Rights(1953)
International Covenant On Civil And Political Rights(2003)
Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention (2011)
Although the women’s journalism has seen a stable development since 1950s, data on gender equality and working conditions in media reveal significant inequalities between male and female employees. The data published by Turkish Statistics Institute on gender distribution in the media demonstrate that out of a total 40,586 people working in printed press, only 15,704 are women (TÜİK, 2016). Similarly, the latest data gathered by Press Advertising Authority (BİK) show that there are only 2,341 women among 7,204 white-collar workers in the printed press (BİK, 2020). The studies covering all forms of media, including printed, visual and digital, demonstrate that the rate of women in journalism in Turkey stands only at 17%, with 20% in printed media and 16% in television broadcasting industry (WMTN, 2015). Disproportionality of gender distribution in the labor force results in gender-related inequality of opportunities and gender-based discrimination, which have become common problems in the media. The inequalities experienced by women journalists in the media industry can be categorized in two groups: The first group involves gender-based discrimination which is related to employment, organizational structure and working conditions in the media (vertical discrimination), and the second group is related to discrimination in professional activities and content production processes (horizontal discrimination) (KSGM, 2008; TGC, 2016; CEİD, 2018).

In this classification, “vertical discrimination” refers to a lack of equal conditions as the male colleagues in terms of employment, seniority and promotion due to social gender patterns, i.e. various gender-based vocational obstacles which are broadly described as “the glass ceiling” (KSGM, 2008; Kuyucu, 2013, pp. 41-43). According to a study by Media Monitoring Group (MEDİZ), out of the executives listed in the mastheads in Turkey, only 21% are women, with even less women working in editorial management positions (10%) (MEDİZ, 2008). Similarly, the study “Masthead of Media: How Many Women, How Many Men?”, published by Tahaoğlu in 2014, demonstrated that men hold the majority of executive positions in media (90%), preventing women from being equally employed in senior posts (Tahaoğlu, 2014). The gender inequality in top jobs in the media suggests that women journalists are not considered to be “competent enough” for executive offices due to their gender, and are often stuck with medium-level positions in the sector, or forced out of the industry, particularly after a certain age level (Karaman, 2006).

Failure to include women in the labor force or executive jobs in the media on equal terms with men also results in the silencing of women’s representation in the industry, while consolidating the male-dominated atmosphere in the sector (Timisi 1996; Dursun, 2010; Bilecen, 2020). Therefore, women are faced with “horizontal discrimination” in the media; in other words, women in journalism are forced to remain within the limits of specific working areas or positions (Kuyucuoğlu, 2013, s.41-43). Researchs demonstrate that women are often employed for desk-bound positions and for specific journalistic activities, including reporting news on “health, family, fashion, celebrity news, culture and arts”, and that men are more actively sought for other areas with higher professional visibility, such as news on “politics, economy, security and sports” (Asker, 2004; Karaman 2006). Being limited with job assignments that are deemed fit for their social gender roles, women are restricted from pursuing better careers in the media, and furthermore, are completely prevented from accessing specific journalistic areas in the sector (MEDİZ, 2008; TGC, 2016).

Although more and more women have been employed in journalism throughout decades, the gender-based division of labor in the media continues to create gender-based discrimination and obstacles against professional development of women in journalism. Studies confirm that Turkish women journalists suffer from multiple forms of rights violations in all areas of the media due to their gender, including “unfair wages, employment without contract or rights and benefits, unfair work load, excessive working hours, inadequate assignments, mobbing, sexual harassment and violence” (TGC, 2016; TGS, 2019; CEİD, 2018).
A business understanding that is built upon gender-based discrimination is dominant in the local media as well as the national press (Arslan & Arslan, 2017; Bilecen 2020; Sarışın, 2020). Representing outstanding majority (91.3%) of the printed news output in Turkey (TÜİK, 2019), local media outlets play a key role in overseeing democracy, human rights and freedoms in local communities as the main practitioners of the rights of communication, expression and information (Gezgin 2007; Girgin, 2007). Despite this vital social role, local news organizations are not immune to male-dominated professional structuring in the media, and to the gender-based vocational inequalities (Bilecen 2020; Sarişın, 2020). Similar to the national media outlets, local news organizations are infested with gender-based obstacles and discrimination against women in journalism. Furthermore, with the recent deterioration of the conditions in the sector, the scope and impact of the gender-related obstacles in the local media have been multiplied (Arslan & Arslan, 2007; Bilecen 2020). The most common gender-based issues challenging women in these organizations include “mobbing, harassment, difficulties in accessing a news source, professional undervaluing and isolation in news production, inequality in wages, and obstacles to promotion to executive positions” (Arslan & Arslan, 2007, p.223). However, the violation of vocational rights of women in local media is not duly recognized in the public space due to a lack of research and data on this issue.

Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to establish the gender-based violations of rights of women in local media and to identify the vocational problems and needs which are closely related to these violations. Our aim is to offer extensive data on the representation of women in local media through a situation analysis of the current conditions and a needs assessment, which will help strengthen the vocational visibility of women journalists in these organizations. In this framework, the data gathered in this research will contribute to the efforts to ensure gender equality in the media industry, and offer guidance for future rights-based policies and legislation.
This study aims at providing an in-depth understanding of the professional experience of women journalists working in local news outlets. Therefore, the focus of the study is an in-depth analysis of the experiences of women journalists working in these organizations in terms of gender-based vocational obstacles and discrimination. Considering the focus of the study is based on personal professional experiences, use of qualitative research methods is deemed to be the most suitable, since these methods are designed “to understand political, economic and socio-cultural aspects of daily life via individual experiences and perspectives” (Berg, 2001). As qualitative research methods “are shaped by the research subject” and discover “subjective sub-meanings and sub-contexts of the researched concepts”, they allow a comprehensive and detailed analysis of experiences of women journalists in local media. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Similarly, as the most common qualitative data gathering method, in-depth interviews allow the participants to convey “their perspectives, thoughts, opinions and behaviors related to their everyday experience using their own sentences and expression methods” (Rapley, 2004; Seale, 2004). Considering all of these factors, this study adopts semi-structured in-depth interviews and thematic analysis method to gather and analyze qualitative data.
2.2. SAMPLING AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The study uses the “purposive/typical sampling method” to select interviewees, since it focuses on a specific professional group (women journalists working in local media) and various criteria related to this group (vocational challenges and obstacles) (Walliman, 2006). In this framework, during the first stage of the study, a comprehensive screening was conducted to locate the remarkably scattered local media outlets in Turkey, and to identify women journalists working for these organizations. As a first step of the study, a comprehensive literature review was conducted covering all published studies, reports and documents on local media and women in journalism. As a second step, the organizations which retain a database of local media organizations in Turkey (public institutions, professional organizations, civil society organizations, research institutions, media organizations, etc.) were contacted to identify the active local news outlets, which allowed access to detailed data on local media networks. The data underwent a desk review to ensure their accuracy and currency. This review helped create an up-to-date list of the local media outlets in Turkey, which were classified into specified categories (type of organization, region & city, publishing and broadcasting capacity, content and activity, number of women journalists and their positions). The most prominent media organizations were identified for each geographical region (see Figure 1: Distribution of Participants by Regions, Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Cities), and research invitations were sent to women journalists working in these organizations. Among the respondents who agreed to participate in the study, 30 women were identified according to specific criteria of representation (vocational position, level of education, work experience, areas of work & journalistic specialization, etc.), who were later invited for semi-structured in-depth interviews.
### Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Şehir</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Edirne</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kocaeli</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gaziantep</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kütahya</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antalya</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hatay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Malatya</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aydın</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>İstanbul</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mardin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>İzmir</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mersin</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bursa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karabük</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Samsun</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Çorum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kayseri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Şanlıurfa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyarbakır</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kırklareli</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tunceli</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Düzce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kirşehir</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Van</td>
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### Figure 1: Distribution of Participants by Regions
2.3. DATA COLLECTION AND FIELD RESEARCH

The field research was started with the preparation of semi-structured interview forms to be used for in-depth interviews, which is the main data collection method in this study. Through a review of researches, reports and academic literature on local media and women in journalism, the theoretical infrastructure and main categories of the interview form were laid out. The draft of the semi-structured interview form was created under these main categories, and the draft was tested in a pilot study with 3 participants. In the light of the data collected during the pilot study, the main categories, the flow and duration the of the interview form were established and the semi-structured interview form was finalized (see ANNEX: Interview Form). The field research started with communications with the prospective participants and the creation of an interview calendar (see Table 2: Research Time Plan). Prior to the interviews, an information and consent form on privacy and protection of personal data was submitted to the prospective participants. The data was collected via 30- or 45-minute semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 participants which were performed via phone or online communication tools. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees. During the interviews, research team made their best efforts to avoid any situation which may otherize, smother or have a negative impact on the participants.

Table 2: Research Time Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of the Research</th>
<th>Time Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building the Project Team</td>
<td>June 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Desk Review of the Local Media Networks and Formation of the Sampling</td>
<td>July 1 - July 15, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>July 1 - July 15, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of the Interview Form</td>
<td>July 15 - July 20, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Preliminary Work for the Field Research/ Selection of the Interviewees and Formation of the Interview Calendar</td>
<td>July 10 - July, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study</td>
<td>July 20 - July 23, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Research</td>
<td>July 25 – August 10, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis and Reporting</td>
<td>August 10 – September 1, 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4. ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

In this study, the collected data was analyzed by using the thematic analysis method. As is widely known, thematic analysis method enables finding similar concepts and themes in data, specifically in the texts of in-depth interviews, and classifying these concepts and themes under comprehensive categorizations to reveal outstanding trends (Boeije, 2010; Clarke & Braun, 2013).

In the thematic analysis process, the fundamental steps of this method defined by Boeije (2010), “open coding”, “axial coding”, and “selective coding”, have been orderly followed (p.96). Initially, the transcripts of the interviews were imported to ATLAS.ti, a data analysis software which is widely used in qualitative studies. This was followed by the first phase of thematic analysis, the “open coding” step, where the outstanding experiences were identified in the interview transcripts using explanatory codes. In the second phase, the data codes that were created during the first review were classified under descriptive concepts according to the semantic relationships between these codes. Finally, the hierarchy and causal relations between these concepts were identified, and the basic “categories/themes” describing the research data were established (Boeije, 2010).

The reporting process was based on the common findings identified during the data analysis in relation to the experiences of women journalists working in local media organizations. These findings were outlined under main categories/themes identified during the analysis, and were supported with details of the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees.
3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. PARTICIPANT PROFILE & DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Age

The women journalists who participated in this study were aged between 18 and 60.

Level of Education

The majority of the participants were university graduates. An outstanding majority of the interviewees had backgrounds in communication and journalism studies, while the remaining were graduates of departments of economic & administrative sciences or sciences & literature.

Figure 2: Distribution of Participants by Age

- 18-24: 3
- 25-29: 6
- 30-34: 8
- 35-39: 6
- 40-44: 2
- 45-49: 3
- 50-54: 2
- 55+: 2

Among all participants: 30 Women Journalists

Figure 3: Participants’ Level of Education

- Graduate: 5
- High School Graduate: 10
- Undergraduate: 15

Among all participants: 30 Women Journalists

Figure 4: Participants’ Areas of Specialization

Among all participants: 18 Women Journalists
Job Positions & Work Experience & Wages

The participants included senior executives (owner, editor in chief, etc.) and mid-level executives (managing editor, news director, editor, etc.) as well as office and field workers in local media organizations. The average journalistic work experience of the interviewees was 10 or more years.

Figure 5: Participants’ Work Experience

Among all participants: 30 Women Journalists

Figure 6: Participants’ Work Areas

Among all participants: 29 Women Journalists

Figure 7: Participants’ Job Positions

Among all participants: 30 Women Journalists

The average salary of the majority of the participants is equal to or slightly higher than minimum wage. Their mean salary can be higher depending on the type of organization or job position; however, those who were novices in journalism are either paid below the minimum wage or employed on voluntary basis without any payment.

Figure 8: Participants’ Wage Level

Among all participants: 30 Women Journalists
3.2. LOCAL MEDIA AND MAJOR PROBLEMS

According to Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which has been ratified by Turkey, everyone has the right to freedom of expression, and this right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers (ECHR, 1954).

In this context, as the primary actors of the freedom of communication, expression and information on regional scale, local media outlets play a vital role in functioning and oversight of democracies, human rights and freedoms in local communities (Gezgin 2007; Girgin, 2007). By reporting local “social, economic, cultural and social events” to the society, these news outlets act as a “mirror” which reflects the socio-cultural characteristics of local communities (Bilecen, 2020, p. 163). In this framework, Gezgin (2007) describes local press as “a dynamic element that enables the expansion of power outwards from the center, and the creation of a structure that favors individuals” (p. 177).

However, local media organizations have different conditions than the news outlets that operate on the national scale, which creates certain obstacles that curb their ability to fulfill this vital mission. These obstacles are broadly classified as “internal factors” (including staffing, technology, management and organizational structure, working conditions, institutional principles and policies, editorial content, economic strength), and “external factors” (audience, local governments, economic developments, advertisers, competition, surrounding geographical region, structural and cultural characteristics of cities) (Vural, 1999, p. 140). In addition to foregoing, the recent “decrease in sales, declining advertising revenue, lack of qualified human resources, gender discrimination among employees, media ownership structure, relationships with news sources, dependency on national news agencies, local branches of mainstream press, struggles in printing and distribution systems” add to the challenges of practicing journalism at local level (Arslan & Arslan, 2017, p.223).

On the other hand, the report published by International Press Institute (IPI) in 2019 has demonstrates that local news outlets are suffocated under increasing political and financial pressure, which undermines their economic and editorial independence. The regression in the national economy as well as the financial contraction in the media sector, in parallel with the revoked publishing licenses and canceled advertising agreements, closure fines and publishing and broadcasting bans as attempts of political pressure, have led to a remarkable decrease in the number of local news organizations (IPI, 2019). Furthermore, some critically important cities and regions of Turkey do not have any local media organizations (i.e., newspapers, television channels and radio stations) any more and the surviving outlets have been merged, which resulted in a decrease in the number of news organizations (IPI, 2019). Under these circumstances, it has become impossible for many in local media to enjoy freedom of expression because of unemployment, underpaid jobs, heavy working conditions, and technical and vocational limitations. Therefore, the access of local journalists to their right of expression has been restricted on both organizational and individual levels.
Similarly, the data collected in this study confirms that the recent regression in the local media has a negative impact on the working conditions in these organizations. All of the participants point out that underpayment and understaffing is a common problem in local media outlets due to financial problems (insufficient revenue from advertising, low sales rates, increased costs of publishing, etc.), which results in increased working hours and workload for journalists. On the other hand, women journalists who participated in this study state that the economic challenges in local media organizations result in restriction of technical capacity and equipment, which creates a monotony in content and diversity of news coverage, and prohibits the opportunities of vocational capacity-building and specialization for journalists (see Table 3: Overall Problems in Local Media).

“Local media organizations are striving to survive with the support of municipalities and public institutions and through public advertisements. But this does not contribute anything to the journalists. On the contrary, the organizations are shrinking, with one journalist doing the work of 5 journalists, and the remaining 4 journalists are made redundant. And if you are able to find a job, you are forced to accept working on minimum wage. Therefore, you have to take a second job to keep your head above the water.”

Editor, Mersin,
Working as a journalist for 20 years

Table 3: General Problems in Local Media

- Underpayment
- Understaffing
- Disproportionate workload & assignments
- Uncertain working hours extending beyond legal limits
- Lack of technical equipment & hardware
- Limitations in accessing news sources & mobility
- Limitations in improving vocational competence & specializing in specific fields of journalism
- Failure to adopt digitalization & new communication technologies
3.3. WORKING CONDITIONS IN LOCAL MEDIA: GENDER-BASED OBSTACLES IN THE SECTOR

3.3.1. HIRING & GENDER-BASED RECRUITMENT

According to the data published by Press Advertising Authority in 2020, out of 7,204 white-collar workers in printed media, only 2,341 are women (BIK, 2020). This imbalance between the number of male and female workers suggests that women journalists are faced with gender-based obstacles when first entering the media sector, in addition to various forms of discrimination they encounter during their careers.

Research data demonstrates that gender-based discrimination against women journalists during hiring processes is also common in local media. According to the accounts by many women journalists, employers in local media often focus on vocational disadvantages that are associated with the social gender role of women when hiring. They rely on various justifications when declining job applications of women journalists, including "She may get married and have children, and she may not be able to work anymore", "She cannot work overtime into late night hours", "She cannot travel everywhere to report news", etc.

The participants underlined that the legal rights assigned to women under Labor Law no. 4857 and Press Labor Law no. 212 (marriage leave, maternity leave, nursing leave, nursing benefit, etc.), which are essentially intended to support gender equality, can at times be used against women:

"The state supports women by giving us these rights but in practice, things are different. For example, the state gives women the right of maternity leave but the bosses think 'If I hire a woman, she may take a birth leave and our work flow may be disrupted' or 'She may get married and quit, and then we’ll have to pay her severance pay, that’s not good’. In the end, they think 'I won’t hire women journalists.'"

Managing Editor, Antalya,
Working as a journalist for 4 years

"As women in journalism, when we apply for a job, we are often turned down by people who say ‘You are not a man, you cannot go out to report news at midnight’. There are so many organizations like this... Women are much more downtrodden in local media. This is because in local media, people believe journalism is only for men. Even the well-known national agencies particularly hire men to report news for them in local areas."

Managing Editor, Antalya,
Working as a journalist for 4 years

"Employers are often worried that women may have children and take a leave of absence or may not show up for work, instead of trying to see if we are really good journalists... When I first applied for a job at the organization that I currently work for, one of the first questions they asked me was ‘Are you married and are you planning to have children?’ If you are single and start working, and later decide to get married or have children, sharing that decision with your boss would create a tension... They never ask those things to our male colleagues."

Reporter, Ankara,
Working as a journalist for 5 years

2 Labor Law no. 4857 (Article 74 & 88)
Press Labor Law no. 212 (Article 16)
Although the majority of the interviewees report that they have been subjected to discrimination in job applications, others point out that women journalists are exclusively sought for in local media depending on their personal experiences. According to a few interviewees from local newspapers in Bolu, Düzce and Aydin, employers particularly look for women journalists for office positions because they believe women are more diligent and responsible in their work and able to fulfill multiple tasks. The same interviewees also state that the organizations adopting this perspective are likely to offer more room for women journalists to specialize in specific areas or focus on field reporting.

On the other hand, the participants’ accounts demonstrate that regional dynamics may also be at play in these recruitment processes. For example, the interviewees who work for local newspapers in Edirne, Kırklareli and Kocaeli claim that employers do not make any gender discrimination when hiring women; however, the respondents from Çorum, Samsun, Antalya, Şanlıurfa and Diyarbakır suggest that women journalists are faced with more challenges when first entering the local media industry. The most common problem reported by these interviewees is the women at the start of their journalism careers, who are often employed on low wages or without any wage at all, and burdened with heavy workload and long working hours.

According to the participants, young women journalists become so frayed and discouraged by these conditions that they think about either quitting their jobs or finding a position in national media agencies.

“There are 4 local television channels in our city but none of them has an anchorwoman... I had a job interview with one of these channels. If the outcome of my application had been positive, it would be a first in our region. But we could not agree on the wage... They offer lower wages to anchorwomen than anchormen.”

Reporter, Şanlıurfa,
Working as a journalist for 3 years
3.3.2. ORGANIZATIONAL UNDERSTANDING & GENDER EQUALITY IN LOCAL MEDIA

As demonstrated by several studies so far, women journalists in Turkey are often faced with “inequality of wages, disproportionate workload & working hours, mobbing, unfair promotion and work assignments” because of their gender (TGS, 2019; CEİD, 2018). The organizational understanding and positioning in terms of gender equality play a key role in creating these gender-based obstacles both in national and local media outlets (Kuyucuoğlu, 2013; Bilecen, 2020). In other words, women employed by organizations where decision-making processes are based on gender equality work in more favorable conditions, while gender-based discrimination is more common in media outlets which do not have this understanding.

All of the women journalists in this study convey that they have not experienced any intra-organizational discrimination based on gender in their local media organizations; to the contrary, they describe the management of their organization as being supportive of women and gender equality in journalism. The accounts of the interviewees reveal that two fundamental dynamics are influential in the creation of an pro-equality mindset in local media organizations:

- **An organizational understanding that supports & empowers women in journalism**

  The experiences of the respondents from various cities confirms the notion that a managerial approach supporting gender-equality in organizations may help eliminate gender-related obstacles in local media. This approach is often adopted by organizations carrying a family culture instead of an institutional one, which is particularly evident in decision-making processes that uphold offering women more opportunities for specialization in various fields of journalism, establishing fair working and recruitment conditions for men and women and providing organizational support to employees against gender-related discrimination (such as mobbing, exploitation, harassment, security threats, etc.). According to the participants, this managerial approach plays a key role in improving vocational capacity and competence of women journalists in local media.

- **Inclusion of women executives & employees in organizational decision-making processes**

  The interviewees’ accounts demonstrate that active participation of women in organizational decision-making processes makes a significant difference in establishing a pro-equality understanding in the management of news organizations. The experiences of the participants from local media outlets where women hold senior executive positions (İstanbul, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kütahya, Tunceli, Malatya, and Van) demonstrate that the working conditions in these organizations are more egalitarian and supportive for women journalists.
3.3.3. EMPLOYMENT

CONTRACT & SOCIAL
SECURITY & BENEFITS

As pointed out by all journalists in this study, the basic financial resource of local media organizations is the revenues from official advertisements. According to the directive of Press Advertising Authority (BİK), the printed media organizations seeking to publish paid advertisements are required to fulfill minimum staffing criteria as specified by the relevant advertisement distribution authority in their regions (governorships or local offices of Press Advertising Authority). The accounts by women journalists in this study demonstrate that the employees of local media organizations hold permanent tenures under employment contracts executed according to Press Labor Law no. 212, and in accordance with the minimum staffing requirements. In this framework, all of the women journalists interviewed state that they currently hold permanent tenures under a press employment contract and have access to legal social security and other benefits (health care insurance, yellow press card, severance pay, annual leave, bereavement leave, marriage leave, maternity leave, nursing leave, etc.).

3.3.4. WORKING HOURS

& WORKLOAD

& ASSIGNMENTS

The experiences of the participants suggest that the workload and responsibilities of women journalists in local media outlets are determined according to their positions in their organizations. Nevertheless, journalists also point out that the widespread problem of understaffing in local media inevitably results in an increase in the amount of work burden. Most of the interviewees state that they often handle multiple tasks in diverse areas which may or may not be relevant to their positions and areas of specialization (news production, page layout and design, proofreading, visual design, management of website & social media, accounting, handling paperwork and tax procedures, etc.). According to the participants, being assigned with multiple tasks, women journalists are faced with more workload and longer working hours. The participants also state that their organizations follow the legal working hours (8-hour workday) and the common office hours (from 09:00 to 17:00); however, due to the problem of understaffing, the starting and ending times of workdays often become unknown and the workload becomes heavier. In particular, the experiences of the women specialized in field reporting demonstrate that the irregular working hours and heavy workload, which varies across various local media outlets depending on their specific reporting processes, have a negative impact on the professional and personal lives of women in journalism.

“Our time at work is quite backbreaking because of the lack of staff; sometimes we work 5-6 hours without leaving our desks... The people in the office have to do almost all kinds of work. For example, I am the managing editor but I also design pages, and I handle paperwork and bills. So, I do more than what a regular managing editor does.”

Managing Editor, Kırklareli, Working as a journalist for 5 years

“Being a journalist in a local news outlet means you have to accept minimum wage, work almost 18 hours a day, have to be available by phone 24 hours, and do all sorts of intellectual and physical work, including making tea, cleaning the office and driving people to places.”

Editor, Mersin, Working as a journalist for 20 years

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3 Regulaton of Press Advertising Authority for Official Announcements and Advertisements and Their Publisher Periodicals [Article 64 & 65];
4 Press Labor Law No. 212, Act 5953 for Regulating the Working Conditions of Press Workers and Labour Relations in Press;
5 Press Labor Law No. 212, Act 5953 for Regulating the Working Conditions of Press Workers and Labour Relations in Press;
However, according to the accounts of the participants, overtime work is a general problem for all employees in local media organizations, and it is not directly associated to gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees point out that they are given the opportunity to cover the news in their areas of interest (politics, economy, security, health, sports, civil society & human rights, culture & arts, etc.) or work on tasks of their own preferences (field reporting or desk jobs) as long as the capacity of their organization allows. Despite the respondents state that they do not personally experience the above described form of gender-based discrimination in their current organizations; they still underline that “horizontal discrimination” is rather common in local media outlets, which means that women journalists are often forced to work only on specific areas in reporting (health, celebrity news, culture & arts, etc.) or only in in-office positions.

On the other hand, when describing the obstacles standing between women and field reporting, the participants often make reference to the socio-cultural oppression of women in local areas (not being able to go out at night, risks of harassment and safety risks, etc.) as well as the sexist mindset and gender-based discrimination imposed by the other actors in the field (colleagues, news sources, etc.). Besides, the experiences of the participants who exclusively prefer office tasks demonstrate that women journalists tend to choose specific tasks due to irregular working hours, excessive workload, problems of mobility and lack of equipment, which are often inevitable in field reporting (see 4.1. Women Journalists in Local Media & Field Work).

“Mostly, all the office work is laid in the hands of the women. Women are expected to make tea, coffee, and even do the cleaning... In local media, women also handle the paperwork in the office, and often have their wages cut down because their bosses think ‘She sits in the office all day doing nothing’

Editor, Mersin, Working as a journalist for 20 years
3.3.5. WAGES & PROMOTIONS & VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The participants in the study give a clear account of their problems in wages and promotions, which, similarly to the patterns of distribution of workload and assignments, highlight the financial challenges in local media outlets. The majority of women journalists state that they do not witness any gender-based discrimination in wage and promotion policies of their organizations; however, they rarely see any hikes in their wages because of the financial contraction of these organizations, which also leads to a problem of understaffing and excessive work burden.

“I work on minimum wage and I do not get any benefits to cover my expenses. We often pay for our own meals when we do field work, and we spend almost half of our wage on travel expenses. To avoid spending money, we dine at small coffee houses.”

Reporter, Edirne, Working as a journalist for 3 years

“On paper appointment” of people without merits to the executive positions, as a way of saving on wages, is also a significant problem that is closely related to the financial challenges in local media. These “on paper appointments” often involve fictitious recruitment of friends and family members of the employers, which, according to the interviewees, undermine the professional visibility of women journalists in local media:

“Some of the women executives in local media have ties with the management and they are not actual journalists. This leads to a deterioration in the status of women journalists. The wives and children of the owners of these organization hold certain positions.”

News Director, Antalya, Working as a journalist for 4 years

Nevertheless, some of the interviewees believe that women journalists have access to promotions and higher positions in local media organizations. These journalists refer to a correlation between better chances of promotion for women in their organizations and a managerial understanding that sees the organization as a family rather than a corporate structure. On the basis of these experiences, it can be suggested that the prevailing managerial understanding in these local media outlets also involves an approach which is based on gender equality, giving recognition to all employees regardless of their gender:

“In 1989, I became the first woman editor in chief of Turkey, and that was largely because I was working in a newspaper which had a family tradition... The family-run newspapers in local communities have a different perspective towards women than the national ones. The managerial understanding is one that offers all kids of support and access for women’s success... Throughout my career, I enjoyed many advantages of working in a newspaper like this.”

Editor in Chief, Gaziantep, Working as a journalist for 36 years

The inclusion of women executives in decision-making mechanisms of media organizations is another factor that helps women climb the career ladder in local media. The experiences of participants working in organizations with women in top jobs (owner, editor in chief, news director, managing editor, etc.) suggest that the working conditions, benefits and opportunities of vocational development for women are more likely to be based on gender-equality in these organizations.
Another outstanding finding of the study demonstrates that women owners of news outlets significantly contribute to the professional visibility of women in local media. As the owners of local newspapers, a number of interviewees state that they have been struggling for their existence as the only woman journalist in their cities, and striving to empower women in journalism in their own organizations. These respondents point out that they make efforts to ensure that women journalists in their organizations are not faced with gender-based obstacles, which they had experienced themselves in the past, and to support vocational development of women:

“When I first started working as a journalist, I was the only woman journalist in my city... After I founded this newspaper, we did not hire any men for 16 years. We were a newspaper run by women, and we hired only women reporters. We became a safe haven for many women in need, and we were more like a civil society organization than a regular media outlet.”

Owner & Editor in Chief, Tunceli, Working as a journalist for 22 years

“I got married and soon after that I got pregnant. I kept working until the due date. Furthermore, I went back to my job 20 days after birth. But all of the women working for me took their full maternity leaves and nursing leaves. I did not have that opportunity in the past but, as the owner of the newspaper, I made sure women working for me had it.”

Owner & Editor in Chief, Kütahya, Working as a journalist for 33 years

These findings demonstrate that a managerial understanding based on a family culture instead of an institutional one plays a vital role in ensuring vocational development of women in local media organizations. According to the experiences of participants, women working in local media outlets are less likely to encounter gender-based vocational discrimination, including “the glass ceiling” or “unfair wages”, as compared to national media organizations; to the contrary, these women have relatively more access to opportunities of promotion and to senior positions. Therefore, women journalists in local media who have access to opportunities of vocational development and climb the ladder can also take significant actions to empower women’s journalism and to eliminate gender-related obstacles in the sector. Nevertheless, it is also evident that financial challenges, a common problem in local media organizations, is a major barrier which has a negative impact on access to fair wages, promotion and vocational development for women in journalism.
3.3.6. MOBBING & WRONGFUL TERMINATION OF CONTRACT & PAY CUTS

The majority of the interviewees in this study state that they have not experienced mobbing, wrongful dismissal or pay cuts in their current organizations. However, some of the participants point out that they had such experiences in the organizations they worked for in the past. According to the accounts of these journalists, financial challenges can at times result in women journalists being forced to resign, wrongfully dismissed or their wages being cut down or unpaid.

On the other hand, the significant majority of the interviewees underline that they have experienced attempts of mobbing, bullying and undervaluation of their work by their women executives and colleagues in local media outlets. The participants refer to this approach as “women’s discrimination against women”, which, according to the respondents, is the result of the overall patriarchal and competitive mindset in the media industry:

“Women do more harm than men against women because, being raised in a patriarchal environment, women see other successful women as rivals, and think they are about to steal away some opportunities from them... For example, the head of the Press Advertising Authority in our city was a woman. She used to tell my employees ‘She shouldn’t take the trouble to try because we won’t let her publish any advertisements.’ Just because of her, we could not get the permission to publish advertisements in 9 months, which normally takes 3 months to get.”

Owner & Editor in Chief, Tunceli, Working as a journalist for 22 years

“Sometimes we have more trouble with female colleagues. In the media industry, many women act like enemies towards other women... For example, our news chief was a woman. Almost every time I wrote a news report, she said ‘That’s not how we write news. You should learn how to write news and try again.’ This gradually turned into mobbing. I resigned three times. The first time, they transferred me to another to solve the problem, but later I had to resign once again.”

Managing Editor, Adana, Working as a journalist for 24 years

3.3.7. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURE & CENSORSHIP & SELF-CENSORSHIP IN LOCAL MEDIA

According to reports, the increasing political and economic pressure on media organizations is the main reason underlying the recent deterioration of the freedom of the press in Turkey (IPI, 2019). The findings of this study demonstrate that local media organizations are also affected by this pressure, which undermines their editorial independence. Advertisements and announcements are the main sources of income for local media outlets. The greater part of the revenues of these organizations come from the official advertisements by public authorities (governor’s offices or local offices of Press Advertising Authority), in addition to the commercial advertisements of local actors (commercial institutions, local businesses, local political parties and politicians, etc.). According to the majority of the participants, the financial relationship with public authorities and political/economic actors in local communities make local media outlets and news reporting processes more vulnerable to external pressure:
WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN LOCAL MEDIA

“The Press Advertising Authority and other public institutions with mandate on the press send us texts about their activities. We are expected to turn these texts into news articles and publish them immediately. Furthermore, sometimes they request scanned copies of the published news articles about them. It is more like an editorial pressure than a simple request.”

Reporter, Ankara, Working as a journalist for 5 years

“A few years ago, the governor’s office started cutting back on advertisements in all local newspapers due to political motivations... Until then, we had been publishing 3 newspapers per day for 35 years, but during that time we had to sell two of them.”

Owner & Editor in Chief, Kütahya, working as a journalist for 33 years

“For example, you write a news article about an institution. Then the news director comes to you saying ‘We should retract this article because this institution pays for advertisements in our paper...’ You are inevitably forced to water down your wording or not publish it.”

Reporter, İzmir, Working as a journalist for 3 years

Some of the journalists state that the political pressure or legal actions against local media undermine the editorial independence and news-writing process of the reporters, triggering an increase in practices of censorship and self-censorship. However, the interviewees convey varying experiences about this issue, which indicates that the political pressure and legal actions against local media outlets may differ across regions. For example, the majority of the respondents confirm that they witness these problems in their cities, while others (Aydin, Bolu, Edirne, Düzce, Kırklareli, Kırşehir, and Samsun) claimed that they were not under any form of pressure from local political actors and could maintain their editorial independence when covering news about political issues.

“If you are the owner of a local newspaper and if you are a dissident, you are oppressed... We had to go to the police station on weekly basis to give testimony in response to criminal complaints... Our relationship with the mayor of the time was like the relationship between a plaintiff and a defendant.”

Managing Editor, Adana, Working as a journalist for 24 years

“When you publish any news about the governor or law enforcement forces, every line and every word you publish is tracked and sometimes you get messages saying ‘Legal action will be taken.’ You are constantly under duress and intimidation. This has become the normal now... After a certain point, you choose self-censorship anyway.”

Editor, Mersin, Working as a journalist for 20 years

“We do not see any pressure coming from political parties. The communication with political actors is often more intense during electoral periods, but it does not impact our impartiality. We are able to maintain equal distance to all political actors... We don’t see a mentality that tries to hold a grip on the media to ensure that only their news are covered...”

Managing Editor, Kirkılareli, Working as a journalist for 5 years
Another important dynamic affecting editorial impartiality in local media is the “social pressure in local communities.” Many participants stress that, as compared to the national media, the journalists in local media outlets have more social visibility and accessibility. Therefore, local actors particularly in small areas (political or bureaucratic representatives, business owners, audience, residents, etc.) can easily reach media organizations and journalists via communication channels or physical visits, which can be at times abused to influence the news-writing process:

“In local communities, everyone knows each other... If someone wants to reach you, they can easily find you. They can even come to your office... For example, one person can come to you and say ‘This article is offensive for us, you should remove it.’”

Editor in Chief, Çorum,
Working as a journalist for 24 years

In small rural cities, if you talk to a random person on the street, you often discover that the two of you are somehow related. Everyone knows everyone and everyone is either an acquaintance or a family member. There is this pressure on local journalists because they think ‘If I write something bad about this person, their whole family would come at me.’ This creates a wall of fear.

Owner & Editor in chief, Tunceli,
Working as a journalist for 22 years

The data confirms that political and economic pressure, a common problem in national media, also has an impact on local media organizations. Varying across regions and organizations, this pressure can at times undermine editorial independence of journalists and organizations, and even lead to practices that cast shadow on the freedom of information in the reporting process (censorship & self-censorship). On the other hand, interviewees’ experiences of social pressure in local communities demonstrate that the obstacles to editorial independence in local media involve multiple dimensions as well as multiple actors.
Working Conditions in Local Media: Advantages & Disadvantages

In the scope of this study, the participants were asked about the pros and cons of working in local media outlets to provide insight about the women journalists’ experience of working conditions in these organizations and to understand how these conditions compare to the national media outlets. The answers to this question demonstrate that the journalists’ experience may vary according to the dynamics of their organizations and the cities they are located in. The varying opinions about the working conditions in local media can be summarized as given in the table below:

**Table 4: Advantages and Disadvantages in Local Media**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working in Local Media Has More Advantages, because</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Working hours are more regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Workload &amp; assignments are more proportionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Journalists can have more visibility &amp; get professional recognition in local communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wages are fairer, and opportunities to work under a contract, have benefits and get promotions are more accessible in local media as compared to the working conditions in national media outlets and the cost of living in bigger cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Depending on organizational and regional factors, there is more vocational support for women journalists as compared to national news outlets</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It is easier to access news sources &amp; run a smooth reporting process</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The visibility and potential social impact of news articles are higher and can be directly observed in local communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The occupational satisfaction of journalism is higher in local news organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Editorial policies are more independent and autonomous in local media, as compared to national news organizations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working in Local Media Has More Disadvantages, because:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Limited financial capacity of local media outlets creates certain obstacles (underpayment, understaffing, disproportionate and diverse workload, lack of technical equipment and limited vocational development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The political, economic and social pressure on news organizations &amp; journalists can be more directly experienced in local media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Editorial independence in reporting processes cannot be maintained in local media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There fewer opportunities for vocational competence &amp; development in local media outlets, as compared to national news organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local media offers fewer opportunities for specializing in specific fields of journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Journalists are more vulnerable to social pressure, violence and security threats as they have more public visibility in local communities</td>
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</table>

“You can observe the direct impact of your news articles in local communities. For example, when you write about a problem in your city, people at the offices of the mayor or the governor immediately see it and can take necessary actions to solve that issue... Journalism in local media can have a real impact on people. You don’t have that power in national media. ”

Reporter, İzmir, working as a journalist for 3 years

“The agenda of the mainstream media is generally shaped by the local media outlets, but this is often taken for granted. For example, we publish an article, and the next day news agencies and television channels publish another version of our piece. But they don’t show us in the background, and we don’t get recognition for our work...”

Managing Editor, Diyarbakır, working as a journalist for 4 years
3.4. THE ROLE OF GENDER & GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND VOCATIONAL OBSTACLES IN LOCAL MEDIA

3.4.1. WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN LOCAL MEDIA & FIELD REPORTING

It is widely argued that the lack of women’s access to field reporting is the most common form of gender-based discrimination in the media industry (Asker, 2004; Karaman 2006; Kuyucuoğlu, 2013). Built upon the socially-constructed gender roles of women, this form of discrimination is most evident in the tendency of the sector to assign women journalists in desk positions or to specific fields in reporting (celebrity news, health, family & children, culture & arts news, etc.) (Kuyucuoğlu, 2013). Furthermore, there is an understanding in the sector which considers that the assignments involving active field reporting (politics, economy, security, sports, etc.) reach beyond the capacity of women, which creates significant obstacles in vocational development of women journalists (Asker, 2004; Karaman 2006).

The data collected through the interviews in this study demonstrate that women in local media who seek field duties are often faced with gender-based obstacles. There is an overall consensus among the interviewees that the women in local media are considered to be incompetent for field reporting due to the gender-based limitations (working late, using & carrying heavy equipment, risks of harassment & safety threats). Due to this common understanding in the sector, which triggers gender discrimination, most of the respondents report that they witness gender-based oppression and bias as part of their field experiences in local media.

“Women are never recommended to cover news about security, courts or social mass movements because people often think ‘You’re a woman, people will push you around... You cannot get anything to write and come back here in tears.’”

Editor, Mersin,
Working as a journalist for 20 years

“...People always think women journalists are weak... ‘She cannot do this, she cannot report from there, she cannot go to the field’... For example, why shouldn’t women cover sports news? What is stopping them? But people think women don’t know anything about football and easily discard them.”

Managing Editor, Adana,
Working as a journalist for 24 years

“In Turkey, being a woman is difficult, and being a woman in journalism is even more so... When you go to the field, you often hear some warnings saying ‘You are a woman reporter, don’t go to that neighborhood, don’t go out on these hours, or something bad may happen to you...’”

Reporter, İzmir,
Working as a journalist for 3 years
Similar experiences by women journalists working in different cities demonstrate that women are still faced with gender-based discrimination even if they improve their competence in active field reporting. According to the interviewees, this discrimination is the repercussion of the widespread sexist mindset in the media sector, and is most evident during their interactions with the other actors in field reporting (colleagues, news sources, audience, etc.). Respondents also share numerous examples in which women are left devoid of equal opportunities as men when reporting news in public areas, including press statements, conferences or mass movements, and furthermore, women are subjected to gender-based discrimination (undervaluation, isolation, harassment, etc.) in these male-dominated areas:

“We are mostly undervalued by our colleagues. Camera crew or photojournalists are often chosen among men. Of course women, being smaller than these men, struggle to get a good shot when standing next to them... And if you happen to trespass into their frames, they scold you.... Sometimes, they move to stand in front of you. If you give them the same reaction, they say ‘Don’t bother, I can shoot this for you.’ No, he can’t shoot it for me, because I’m there too, so why should he shoot it for me? But they don’t see it the same way. They think this is a fatherly, protective behavior and not discrimination.”

Reporter, Ankara,
Working as a journalist for 5 years

“Once I went to cover news at an award ceremony. There were 10 or 15 male reporters... At one point, I had to put my bag on my back to protect myself from harassment... There are so many male reporters who try to lean on you or touch you when you bend over to take a photo. And these people have been reporting from the field for many years...”

News Director, Antalya,
Working as a journalist for 4 years
According to the interviewees, sexism against women journalists is also common among the social actors with whom they have to interact during their field work (news sources and audience). The participants stated that, due to this sexism, they are faced with gender-based bias and discrimination, and their professional work is often judged by their gender roles, which significantly disrupts the reporting process in field work.

“**You contact your source to schedule an interview. When you get there, he says ‘Sister, I thought you were the secretary. A journalist should be a man.’**”

Managing Editor, Diyarbakır,  
Working as a journalist for 4 years

“When I first started working as a journalist, I wrote an article which was critical of the football club of the city... Later, a hardcore fan of the team made a comment under the article, which said ‘You are a woman, you should write about cosmetics or celebrities. You have nothing to do with sports!’ It’s really sad to see that your work is evaluated only by your gender.”

Reporter, Şanlıurfa,  
Working as a journalist for 3 years
The pressure on women to improve their physical appearance and vocational competence is the most outstanding form of socially constructed gender patterns faced by working women. Being common in almost all business sectors, this oppression may be even more evident in some professional areas with high public visibility and social interaction, including journalism (TGC, 2016; TGS, 2019). Studies on national media and television broadcasting demonstrate that women in media industry are often forced to measure up to high expectations about their looks, and their vocational capacity is mostly associated with their physical appearance (WMTN, 2015; TGS, 2019). Interviews with women journalists in local media confirm that the impositions on women’s looks are also common in these news organizations, and furthermore, these expectations can reach beyond their working hours and affect their personal lives. Almost all of the participants highlight the apparent importance of their professional profile in local media, and the influence of this profile on their relationships with their organizations, colleagues and other local actors. For example, some of the respondents (Antalya, Edirne, Bursa, Mardin) point out that they have received comments or warnings from their executives or colleagues about their grooming or their outfit. In addition, most of the participants report that they make sure to have a serious and formal look during their interactions with news sources or other local actors (political or bureaucratic representatives) to avoid any behaviors that may violate professional limits:

“As a woman in journalism, you have to be careful about your private life. You have to schedule the interviews in the daytime, and you have to be careful about your outfit... Women journalists in local media have to maintain a perfect or a model profile at all times because everyone is out to get you.”

Managing Editor, Adana,
Working as a journalist for 24 years

“People often judge you by your clothes, your posture or even the way you laugh... A male colleague can behave in a certain way when working and not worry about it, but if you behave in the exactly same way it may gain a completely different meaning.”

Editor, Mersin,
Working as a journalist for 20 years
The major problem regarding the women journalists’ profile in local media is the “undervaluation” of their vocational competence. According to the vast majority of the participants, there is a prevalent understanding in local media which sees journalism as “men’s job”, and considers women are void of necessary vocational competence and capacity for this occupation. In this framework, the interviewees state that they experience numerous situations in which their competencies are undervalued or their skills are questioned because of their gender.

“If you are a woman journalist in local media, people don’t trust in your intelligence. They look down on you... For example, even the most experienced women who studied journalism at a university and who have been working in this sector for many years are not duly respected. They get respect for the sake of the organization they work for, but not for the sake of their knowledge or experience.”

Editor in Chief, Çorum,
Working as a journalist for 24 years

“I am the managing editor. When I welcome visitors at the office, they think I am just the office maid who serves the guests. Some even say ‘Miss, may I have a cup of tea?’ Our society is not quite used to seeing women journalists around.”

Managing Editor, Diyarbakır,
Working as a journalist for 4 years

“You get insults from people via comments on social media or via direct messages. People say ‘You’re just a woman, you can’t not understand or comment about this subject’ or ‘A woman should be mild-tempered, she cannot talk harshly or criticize something like this.’”

Editor, Mersin,
Working as a journalist for 20 years

Our findings also demonstrate that the gender-based vocational undervaluation of women in journalism puts a pressure on them to improve their competence in this vocation. The majority of the interviewees emphasize that, as a way of struggling against the bias on women in journalism, they strive to improve themselves in multiple areas of journalism. Described by the respondents as “efforts to maintain a strong profile as a woman journalist”, this tendency suggests that women in local media can overcome the undervaluation of their work only by asserting themselves as “stern, fearless, versatile, tenacious and infallible” professionals. Due to this imposition forcing women to specialize on a diverse range of journalistic areas (reporting, photojournalism, digital & graphic design, website management, page design, typesetting, redaction, accounting, etc.), women in local media are often considered as “jill of all trades.” Particularly the interviewees who hold managerial positions (owner, editor in chief, managing editor, news director, editor, etc.) or specialize in field reporting suggest that their achievement and competence in local media has been the result of their persistent efforts and devotion towards vocational development.

“In a similar way to the other sectors, women in media have to work twice as more than men, and they have to be twice as successful as men. A single achievement is not enough sometimes because we are always seen as second-class individuals... Therefore, like every woman in journalism, I have to struggle to prove myself when I work in the field.”

News Director, Ankara,
Working as a journalist for 15 years

“Unfortunately, there are very few women journalists in rural areas... And even if you work and prove your competence in the sector, people start seeing you ‘as a man’ after a certain point, and only then you are deemed worthy of a good position.”

Reporter, Kayseri,
Working as a journalist for 11 years
3.4.3. LOCAL ACTORS & WOMEN JOURNALISTS
AND SOCIAL PRESSURE

As mentioned above, the political, financial and social pressure on local media outlets can have a negative impact on editorial policies as well as individual vocational experiences of journalists. However, the research data reveals that there may be gender-related differences in the way individuals experience such pressure. According to the accounts of several interviewees, the pressure from local actors (political or bureaucratic representatives, local business owners, residents, etc.) are often shaped by gender when women journalists are involved. The participants confirm that this pressure can at times turn into sexism, as a result of the understanding and bias against women in journalism, and women can be subjected to oppression about various aspects of their personal lives (physical appearance, private life, political views, etc.). Besides, the interviewees agree that, as compared to their male colleagues, women journalists experience these impositions more frequently and they can be more easily targeted:

“...In 2016, I quit my job at a media organization and started my own newspaper... We had a dissenting and critical editorial policy. Then we published a news article about a contractor company, and the owner literally raided our office. He came to threaten us with a sidearm... They have the courage to intimidate us and make us retract the article because we are women...”

Managing Editor, Adana,
Working as a journalist for 24 years

“There are a lot of nightclubs in our city, and one day the municipality launched restrictions on opening and closing times of these clubs... The nightclub owners raided the municipality building, and had a row with the mayor... I was the only reporter there. Everyone, even the male reporters were afraid to publish it but I was not. I even put my name under the article. This really drew a rebuff, and people attacked me because of my gender, saying ‘What will you do when you get married and your husband starts going to nightclubs?’”

Reporter, Edirne,
Working as a journalist for 3 years

“At a press statement, a demonstration or a meeting, if you are wearing lipstick and if you look well-groomed, people approach you with a derogatory, othering attitude, which ultimately leads to vocational isolation. They treat you as if you are not there to report the news as a journalist but as a ‘woman’ just piddling around...”

Editor, Mersin,
Working as a journalist for 20 years

These experiences shared by the interviewees reveal how the political, financial and social pressure on local media outlets and journalists can be based on gender discrimination. The data also demonstrates that the vocational obstacles against women in local areas are not only shaped by factors related to this specific sector or working conditions, but also by pressures from outside of the sector (political, financial and social pressure), which can undermine professional activities of women in journalism and even lead to gender-based threats of harassment and safety risks.
3.4.4. WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES & SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED GENDER ROLE & PERSONAL LIFE

Women journalists’ experience of the conflict between socially-constructed gender roles and their vocational development often reaches beyond their offices and affects their personal lives and families. It is evident that the harsh working conditions in local media outlets (workload in diverse areas, working late, field reporting and duties that involve traveling to other cities, etc.) can trigger gender-related obstacles in personal lives and households of women journalists. All of the interviewees confirm that they have access to their legal rights under Labor Law no. 4857 (marriage leave, maternity & nursing leave, nursing benefit, etc.); however, some of the respondents choose to take a break from their job or request to be transferred from field work to desk positions after marriage or childbirth. Particularly the women journalists who are married with children point out that they are struggling to maintain a balance between their work life and their social responsibilities arising from their socially-constructed roles as a mother and a wife:

“As women, we are burdened with many responsibilities, and these are laid on us by the society: coming home early, cooking, looking after the children... As a journalist, if you can’t make time to do the house chores, people just say ‘This is a job for men...’ For example, if you have to go out to report in the middle of the night, your acquaintances say ‘How can you be a mother?’”

Reporter, İzmir, Working as a journalist for 3 years

“Even if we try to specialize in fieldwork, there is a role which we can’t renounce: being a mother and a wife... For example, when there is an out of town duty and we have to travel, simply can’t do it. Of course, my husband supports me but still, it’s not as easy for me as it is for a man... In our career, the challenging thing for us is not the job we do, but the roles we take on as women.

Managing Editor, Düzce, Working as a journalist for 6 years

“Being a journalist in a local community is more than a job, it’s more like a life style. Some days I leave home at 9:00 and come back at midnight. My husband is a journalist, so he understands, but if he had a different job, he wouldn’t tolerate this.”

Managing Editor, Aydin, Working as a journalist for 4 years

“A man who has been raised with a patriarchal mindset thinks ‘A woman’s place is home, her job is to cook and do the laundry...’ So, when you come back from reporting at 3:00 in the morning, it’s a problem.”

News Director, Antalya, Working as a journalist for 4 years

These challenges described by the interviewees underline the career disadvantages brought by socially-constructed gender roles of women. Therefore, in comparison to their male colleagues, women journalists have to fight more against gender-based limitations and obstacles in their work life and family life. For example, the majority of the participants confirm that, due to their family-related duties and irregular working hours, women journalists tend to drop out at younger ages than men, or choose to keep low-profile or junior positions in the sector. This also suggests that gender-based vocational inequalities, which is known to be common in national media, is also a widespread phenomenon in local media organizations.
3.4.5. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE & SAFETY THREATS

According to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (2000) “gender-based violence” is any form of violence committed against women because of their gender that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately, which is a major violation of fundamental rights and freedoms. In other words, as a form of discrimination against women, acts of gender-based violence are the acts resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life as a result of unequal power relations built upon the assumed differences between men and women. In this framework, the forms of gender-based violence against women are classified as follows:

**Physical violence:** any act that results in damage of physical integrity or distress. Physical violence involves all actions that result in physical damage on individuals, including coercion to live in unhealthy conditions or honor killings.

**Sexual violence:** any attempt to force an individual to have sexual intercourse in a place, at a time or in a way that is not consented by that person; any sexual act without the person’s consent or any attempt to use sexuality as a tool of intimidation and control. World Health Organization (WHO) describes sexual violence as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”

**Psychological violence:** any act that results in emotional pressure on the victim via systematic assaults such as shouting, terrorizing, swearing or insulting at or humiliating a person, or limiting their relationships with others or their freedom of movement, or inciting a feeling of unworthiness.

**Economic violence:** any act resulting in use of economic resources as a tool for threatening or controlling women, such as limiting a person’s expenditures, or forcing them to work or prohibiting them from working, or exclusion of women from financial decision-making processes or causing a woman being dismissed by making a scene at the work place, or restricting a woman from developing certain skills which may help her find a job.

**Digital violence:** any act of gender-based intimidation or abuse via online/offline digital communication channels or social media platforms by use of hate speech, online messages, texts or comments containing direct attacks on the gender, sexual identity or safety of women, or other acts such as cyber-stalking.

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6 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (2011, Article 3/d)

7 CEDAW (1979) and Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention 2011, Article 3/a)
On the basis of the definitions given above, research data demonstrates that women journalists in local media are subjected to various forms of gender-based violence in their professional activities. The most common forms of gender-based violence that is witnessed by the participants include “physical violence and safety threats,” “sexual exploitation and harassment,” “abuse of communication channels”, and “digital violence and bullying”. In these experiences, the perpetrators of violence are often the individuals they interact with during reporting, including colleagues, news sources, audience members and other local actors (political or bureaucratic representatives, public officials, local business owners, residents, etc.).

The study data reveals that the most common form of gender-based violence against women journalists in local media is “sexual exploitation and harassment.” The interviewees reported that, particularly during their field work, the abovementioned actors often abuse the professional relationship and channels of communication, and such abuse may at times turn into sexual exploitation and harassment. On the other hand, according to the respondents, the high public visibility of journalists, particularly in local communities, also makes women journalists more vulnerable to violence and threats of sexual violence:

“Sometimes we have to travel to remote neighborhoods of the city for a news report, and in some cases, we have to go there on our own... In these neighborhoods, people immediately understand that you are an outsider and you are there for the news... Even if you are not alone, you can be the target of verbal or physical harassment. People can catcall or stalk you.”

Reporter, İzmir,
Working as a journalist for 3 years

“It was during my early years as a journalist. I wrote an article about a pervert who stalked women in the city. This pervert later started sending me messages, saying ‘I know what time you go out at night, and where you walk your dog.’ I had to file a criminal complaint.”

Reporter, Edirne,
Working as a journalist for 3 years

“You contact someone for a news report, and in the middle of the night, he sends you text messages saying ‘How are you?’ He starts by writing ‘Thank you very much for the article, I like it’, and then tries to keep the communication going by using various pretexts... This never happens to our male colleagues.”

Managing Editor, Aydın,
Working as a journalist for 4 years

“For example, when you try to schedule an interview, the man insists on making the interview over dinner. Yes, a journalist can meet with a news source in the evening too, but the meeting should happen in the office or a public location according to professional standards. However, the nature of these offers change in time, and suddenly the man asks you ‘Where should I pick you up?’ or ‘Are you free tonight?’”

Reporter, İstanbul,
Working as a journalist for 13 years
Women journalists are often faced with “physical violence and safety threats” when fulfilling their duties in local media outlets. Particularly the experiences of women in active field reporting demonstrate that local actors seeking to prevent the publication of a news report can resort to intimidation or attempts of physical violence against women journalists to discourage them.

“When you go to the field to report and one of the people you deal with is a man, he thinks he can assault you more easily because he has the power to do that. I have been insulted, spat at and kicked many times when reporting... I have been threatened many times, they even came and shot a few bullets at my house.”

Editor in Chief, Kocaeli, Working as a journalist for 18 years

“I started a local daily in 2004... Two local newspapers in the city saw us as rivals... They started threatening us... One day, one of the owners of these newspapers came to our building, and he started shouting ‘Come outside!’. He wanted to beat me. He did not know me personally, so I invited him in. I sat with him and asked him what the matter was. He said ‘As a woman she comes and wants a slice of our profits.’”

Owner & Editor in chief, Tunceli, Working as a journalist for 22 years

“...So many times they punctured my tires, or broke the glasses of my car. I received many threats. They once called me and said ‘Do you keep your papers in a safe at your office? Be careful, there can be an electrical contact in the building and your office may burn down.’”

Managing Editor, Adana, Working as a journalist for 24 years

As is the case in national media, digitalization and rising use of online platforms & social media have brought an increased public visibility and accessibility for journalists in local media. The study data demonstrates that this increased digital visibility has resulted in a hike in incidents of gender-based digital violence against women journalists. The accounts of numerous interviewees reveal that digital communication channels are often abused in way that results in sexual harassment and exploitation:

“Once I ran into a policeman when reporting, who checked my ID card. Later, he found me on social media and harassed me.”

News Director, Antalya, Working as a journalist for 4 years

“For example, male journalists add you as a friend on social media, and you accept their friend request because he’s a colleague... But later, he makes comments under all of your posts, sends direct messages, and wants to have your personal phone number. Communication suddenly turns into harassment.”

Reporter, Ankara, Working as a journalist for 3 years
Phone numbers are easily accessible because in local communities, sometimes you have to contact people by phone... I had to change my number three times because people were calling me at dawn, thinking ‘There is a woman journalist that I know, maybe I can have a chat with her...’ For similar reasons I use an abbreviated version of my name on social media because some people search my name, look at my photograph and somehow find my personal accounts.”

Managing Editor, Diyarbakır, Working as a journalist for 4 years

As a journalist in a local community, you have to be on good terms and communicate with everyone because anyone can be a news source. But these sources can at times abuse your communication channels, for example, by sending a text message at 3:00 in the morning or sending a video call request, saying ‘There is this news, I want to tell you about it...’ Sometimes you have to sort it out without telling your boss because then he may start looking for a male reporter to replace you...”

Reporter, Edirne, Working as a journalist for 3 years

The accounts of the participants confirm that social gender-based violence is a major vocational obstacle for women working in local media. These experiences lead to an occupational burnout among women, as well as resulting in violations of fundamental rights as they involve significant threats against their physical and mental integrity. The majority of the interviewees emphasize that, although the executives and colleagues in their organizations are supportive of women in cases of gender-based violence, there is a dire need for an oversight and sanctioning mechanism in the whole sector to completely eliminate violence & safety threats against women in media.
In this study, 30 women journalists from local media organizations based in various cities in Turkey described the problems they experienced in local media and the obstacles standing in the way of women who want to perform better in their career. Interviews with these journalists reveal that, in certain aspects, women in local media have similar experiences of working conditions; however, in other issues, their stories are rather different from each other. According to an overall evaluation of the research findings, one of the main conclusions is that women journalists in local news outlets are subjected to gender-based obstacles and discrimination in their work, and the specific working conditions in these organizations effectively result in gender inequality. In our findings, the outstanding problems and obstacles that are witnessed by all respondents can be listed as follows:

• The recruitment policy in local media is not based on gender equality, and therefore women are not offered equal conditions in the sector due to the gender-based opportunity gap.

• The financial problems and deteriorating organizational capacity in local media have an adverse impact on vocational development and working conditions for women in journalism. Underpayment, understaffing, having small teams for multiple tasks, disproportionate workload, overtime, technical impossibilities and many other problems pose significant challenges for women in their occupational activities.

• The widespread sexist mindset and bias in local media against “women in journalism” restricts access of women to specific areas of reporting or field duties. Even if they find a way to overcome these restrictions, women journalists are often subjected to undervaluation and gender-based pressure about their occupational capacity or competences. When considered with the socially-constructed gender roles of women, these problems add to the existing pressure on women in local media and hinder their vocational development.

• Women journalists are also faced with gender-based bias and discrimination as well as gender-based violence and safety threats in their work-related interactions with local actors.
In the last chapter of the study, the participants were asked to make some recommendations to eliminate the problems in local media and the obstacles against women in journalism. In their responses, all interviewees emphasize that gender equality in local media can only be ensured by introducing comprehensive structural regulations and sanctions on professional ethics and conduct in the sector. The outstanding recommendations that should become more publicly visible are listed below:

- Sectoral rules should be laid out to improve the working conditions in local media, and supervisory boards should be created to ensure the implementation of regulations on working conditions & vocational rights. The rights violations should be eliminated by establishing complaint & support mechanisms.

- The prohibitively restricting rules and regulations in the press advertisement system, should be revised to alleviate the financial problems of local media outlets. (e.g. easing the criteria for publishing advertisements, improvements in pricing, amount and frequency of advertisements, facilitating the loaning and borrowing procedures, etc.)

- Through new regulations, vocational training and experience should be a precondition for obtaining broadcasting and publishing licenses and ownership in order to increase the number of local media organizations offering quality content.

- Regulations that require vocational training and experience in recruitments should be improved to increase the number of qualified employees in local media outlets, and the curricula of media and communication departments of universities should be expanded to include vocational practices and specialization.

- Legal framework should be improved to increase the number of women employees and executives in organizations for ensuring gender equality in recruitment processes.

- Intra-sectoral complaint & support commissions should be created to address gender-based rights violations, and vocational sanctions should be introduced against organizations and individuals in breach (e.g. revoking broadcasting and publishing licenses, dismissing from profession, etc.)

- Compulsory training modules on gender, gender equality in media and rights-based journalism should be developed for media and communication faculties to improve professional ethics on gender equality.

- Vocational unions and civil society organizations should be created to empower and improve occupational solidarity within women in journalism.

- The number of women members should be increased in existing vocational unions and civil society organizations and more women should be included in decision-making processes to ensure the representation in membership is based on gender equality.

- Vocational unions and civil society organizations should organize vocational trainings and activities to rise awareness (reports, guidelines, conferences, seminars, etc.) on gender equality and gender-based rights violations in local media.
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ANNEX: INTERVIEW FORM

CATEGORY A: Demographic Data on Working Life

- Demographic Information
  - Name & Surname
  - Date of Birth
  - Marital Status

- Can you tell us what kind of journalistic training you have received and what is your past work experience?

- Education
  - The last school/university & department you graduated from
  - (If none) Training in communication

- Your past work experience
  - Organizations you worked for
  - Departments and positions you worked in
  - (If any) Your journalistic area of specialization

- Your current working conditions:
  - Organization you currently work at
  - Position and Title
  - Working hours and conditions
  - Salary
  - Employment Contract and Social Security Status
  - Access to personal rights in your organization (Maternity leave, marriage leave, nursing leave, availability of the day care etc.)

CATEGORY B: Local Media

- How do you define local journalism?
- How do you define local media in comparison to national journalism and citizen journalism?
- What does the future of local journalism look like for you?

CATEGORY C: Local Media & Social Gender

- What do you think about being a woman journalist in your society?
- Does being a woman journalist entail any advantages or disadvantages? How do you experience them?
- Is there any form of social pressure you observe/experience as a woman in journalism? How do you experience this?
  - How do you experience the difference between journalism in an urban area and in a rural region in this regard?
  - What kind of differences does being a woman journalist make in national media/local media?
- How do you experience the journalistic advantages or disadvantages of your socially-constructed gender role?
  - What do you think about women journalists being faced with more problems and obstacles in maintaining a balance between work and private life as compared to your male colleagues?
  - What are your observations and experiences about women journalists prematurely quitting their jobs due to gender-related reasons (marriage, birth, etc.)?
  - What kind of difference does the gap between national and local media create in terms of women journalists’ experience of these advantages and disadvantages?
CATEGOR Y D: 
Discrimination in the Sector

• Are there any forms of gender-based discrimination you have observed/experienced as a woman journalist in local media? What are the most common forms of discrimination you have observed/experienced? How do you experience these issues?

• Are there any gender-related vocational obstacles or problems you have experienced/observed in local media? How do you experience these?
  
  o As compared to your male colleagues, what are the differences in these genders’ experience of these problems?

  o What kind of differences are there in local and national media in terms of the scale of these problems? Please compare.

• Do you find yourself in situations in which you are not taken serious as a journalist in local media because of your gender? How do you experience this?

• Do you think there is a pressure on women journalists about their physical appearance in your work area? What are your experiences and observations related to this pressure?
  
  o What kind of differences are there in local and national media in terms of the scale of these problems? Please compare.

Women’s employment in the sector & gender-based recruitment

• Have you observed or experienced any form of gender-based discrimination during job seeking & recruitment process?
  
  o Have you had any experiences in which your job application was rejected just because you are a woman?

  o Have you had any experiences in which you were dismissed from your job just because you are a woman?

  o What do you think about your male colleagues having more leverage over you when being recruited/laid off?

  o What are the obstacles standing in the way of women in journalism in this regard?

  o What kind of differences do you observe/experience in national media/local media in terms of these obstacles?

Problems of Violence & Safety

• Are there any gender-related safety issues you observe/experience in your work area? How do you experience these issues?
  
  o As a woman journalist, what kind of obstacles/problems do you encounter when doing field work or trying to reach news sources?

  o As compared to your male colleagues, what are the differences in two genders’ experiences of these obstacles/problems?

  o What kind of differences do you observe/experience in national media/local media in terms of these obstacles? Please compare.

• Are there any incidents of gender-based violence against women journalists in your work area? What are the most common incidents? How do people experience these incidents?
  
  o Which forms of violence (psychological, physical, sexual or digital violence and bullying, mobbing, etc.) are imposed on employees?

  o Who or what are the main sources of violence? (news sources, colleagues, readers, etc.)

  o What kind of differences do you observe/experience in national media/local media in terms of these incidents?

  o As compared to your male colleagues, what are the differences in women journalists’ experience of violence and bullying?
WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN LOCAL MEDIA

What kind of solidarity and coping mechanism do women journalists develop in these situations? Please share if there are any solutions that have been developed.

If none, what kind of conditions or mechanisms can be introduced to solve these problems? What are your expectations and recommendations about this?

CATEGORY D: Discrimination in the Organization

Is there a specific understanding/policy about gender equality and discrimination in your organization? What do you think about this?

For example, does your organization have a directive/policy/mechanism to eliminate gender discrimination? What are your thoughts and observations about this?

What do you think about the approach of your organization towards the cases of gender-based discrimination you have witnessed so far?

How do you evaluate the employees and working environment in your organization in this regard?

Workload & Assignments

Is there a fair distribution of assignments & workload in your organization? What is your experience of this issue?

As a woman, do you find yourself in situations in which you feel you are subjected to gender-based discrimination in this regard?

As compared to other (male) colleagues, do you feel you are burdened with more workload and responsibilities?

Do you have access to work in journalistic areas in which you want to specialize? Do you feel that the tasks you focus in your work are often limited to general areas or on specific subjects (celebrity news, health, etc.)?

Do you prefer desk (office) assignments or other work active field research? To which level does your organization care about your preferences or take them into account in decision-making?

Do you have any experiences in which you are prevented from taking on an assignment (e.g. active field work/field research) because of your gender?

Do you think your other (male) colleagues have more access to opportunities of specialization & vocational improvement? If yes, what are these opportunities?

If you believe there is discrimination against you in this regard, what kind of conditions or decision-making mechanisms would be fairer and more pro-equality for you? What are your expectations and recommendations about this?

Wages & Promotions

Do you think your wage is proportional to your job description and workload? If no, why?

Do you experience any form of gender-based discrimination in wage offers? What kind of discrimination are you faced with?

What is the understanding and policy of your organization on this issue?

Do you have any experiences in which your other (male) colleagues do the same work as you and other women employees but are paid better wages?

Have you ever experienced discrimination in promotions or when being moved to a higher position? Please describe your experiences.

What is the understanding and policy of your organization on this issue?

Do you have any experiences in which your other (male) colleagues work in the same conditions as you and other women employees but have more access to promotions?

Have you ever had any experiences in which a male colleague doing the same work as you was particularly preferred for a higher position instead of you or a female colleague?
Censorship & Pressure & Violence

• As a woman in journalism, do you encounter bureaucratic/political pressure and obstacles from actors in local governments? How do you experience this?
  - What difference does your gender make in the way you experience this pressure or these obstacles?

• What do you think about political parallelism and political polarization in the media (and resulting obstacles against independent & impartial journalism)? In this context, what kind of experiences have you had?
  - What difference does your gender make in the way you experience this pressure or these obstacles?
  - What kind of differences does the gap between national and local media make in the way you experience these obstacles? Please compare.

• Have you ever been subjected to editorial pressure or censorship in your organization? Please describe your relevant experience.
  - If yes, have you had any experiences in which editorial pressure or censorship was based on gender discrimination?
  - What are the differences between male and female employees in terms of the way they experience pressure & censorship?

• Do you find yourself in situations in which you are forced resort to self-censorship, and how do you experience these situations?
  - What is the impact of your gender on these experiences?
  - What are the differences between male and female employees in terms of the way they experience self-censorship?

• Have you ever witnessed any form of gender-based violence in the organization you currently work for or worked previously at?
  - Which forms of violence (psychological, physical, sexual or digital violence and bullying, mobbing, etc.) have you witnessed?
  - If you had such experiences, how did you feel about it? What made you feel strong or desperate?
  - Were you able to develop any coping mechanisms in this process? Please share if there are any solutions that you have developed.

• If you have experienced/witnessed cases of discrimination or violence, what kind of conditions or mechanisms would have helped you get through this process? What are your expectations and recommendations about this?