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## Navigating Hostility: The Role of Cultural and Political Dynamics in Online Harassment of Female Journalists in India

Yasir Ahmed<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Jitendra Singh<sup>2</sup>, Andleeb Raza<sup>3</sup>, Tanvir Ahmed<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Scholar in Journalism and Mass Communication, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, Email: [yasirahmed78614@gmail.com](mailto:yasirahmed78614@gmail.com), Orcid. Id 0000-0002-5836-3491

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor (Department of in Journalism and Mass Communication) Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, Email: [jitendrasingh079@gmail.com](mailto:jitendrasingh079@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Ph.D. research scholar at lovely professional university, department journalism and mass communication, Email: [Yasirahmed78614@gmail.com](mailto:Yasirahmed78614@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Assistant professor at Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University Department of English, Email: [Tanvirahmed@bgsbu.ac.in](mailto:Tanvirahmed@bgsbu.ac.in)

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### Abstract

This study critically examines how cultural and social identities, coupled with the volatile political climate, influence the frequency and nature of online harassment faced by women journalists in India. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research incorporates quantitative data from a survey of 113 female journalists and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with seven journalists from diverse backgrounds. The findings reveal a significant correlation between cultural events and increased harassment, highlighted by a strong Spearman's rank correlation coefficient of 0.974. Political events similarly elevate harassment risks, confirming that both the perception and severity of harassment intensify during such periods. Additionally, the effectiveness of institutional support and personal coping strategies are scrutinized, indicating a crucial role for media organizations in mitigating harassment through proactive measures. The study not only highlights the specific vulnerabilities of women journalists in India but also calls for comprehensive policy reforms and stronger organizational support systems to safeguard these vital voices in the media landscape. The strong empirical evidence presented urges immediate action to ensure a safer online environment, fostering a more inclusive and equitable journalistic field.

Keywords: Online Harassment, Female Journalists, Social Identity, Political Climate, Digital Media Safety

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### Introduction

The convergence of social media and journalism has transformed news dissemination and engagement, offering unprecedented opportunities for outreach and interaction. However, this progression also exposes journalists, particularly women in India, to heightened vulnerabilities regarding online harassment. Such harassment not only challenges journalists' credibility and freedom of expression but also significantly impacts their mental well-being. This phenomenon is highly connected with multifaceted socio-cultural distinctions, political landscapes, and deep-rooted gender prejudices, necessitating a thorough investigation of its origins and consequences (Sarikakis et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2021; Holton et al., 2023).

This study aims to critically examine how social identity and political contexts influence the online harassment faced by female journalists in India. Specifically, it explores how these factors shape the type and frequency of harassment encountered. The research investigates the relationship between gender dynamics, media visibility, and technological access, aiming to delineate the specific manifestations of online harassment and propose practical measures to alleviate its adverse effects.

### Research Objectives:

1. To assess the influence of cultural and social identities on online harassment.
2. To investigate the correlation between political events and online harassment.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of coping strategies and institutional support in reducing the impact of online harassment.

To achieve these objectives, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews. This methodology provides a comprehensive examination of the factors behind online harassment and establishes a direct correlation between the purported influences and the empirical data amassed, thereby enhancing the consistency of the narrative and presenting a clear trajectory for our analysis (Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Vickery & Everbach, 2018; Tandoc et al., 2021).

By laying a healthy empirical groundwork, this study paves the way for an in-depth exploration of how online harassment intersects with broader social and political landscapes, influencing the role of women journalists in the public domain. This research not only highlights the specific vulnerabilities of women journalists in India but also calls for comprehensive policy reforms and stronger organizational support systems to safeguard these vital voices in the media landscape.

### Literature Review

Research on the online abuse of women journalists in India highlights the pervasive and gendered nature of harassment these professionals face. Studies document that online platforms are rife with threats, sexual harassment, and defamatory remarks aimed at silencing women journalists (Basu, 2012; Tewari & Mehendale, 2023). This abuse is often exacerbated by social media's anonymity, which emboldens perpetrators and complicates accountability (Gurman, Nichols & Greenberg, 2018). Research by Carlson and Witt (2020) highlights the psychological toll of such harassment, linking it to mental health issues and professional burnout.

Despite the growing body of work, significant gaps remain in understanding the intersection of caste, religion, and regional identity within the context of online abuse (Joshi, 2023). Most existing studies focus on the general nature of online abuse and its impacts, without examining how these specific social factors influence the type and severity of harassment (Lewis, Zamith & Coddington, 2020; Chen et al., 2020). For instance, Koirala (2020) found that regional and cultural contexts significantly shape the nature of harassment in Nepal, suggesting similar localized studies are needed for India. Hanusch et al. (2024) explored the experiences of Fijian women journalists, revealing significant regional differences in harassment patterns, which highlight the necessity of context-specific research.

Moreover, the effectiveness of coping mechanisms and institutional support systems specific to the Indian media landscape has not been thoroughly investigated (Rego, 2018). Studies such as Demir and Ayhan (2022) highlight the unique challenges faced by women in different journalism sectors, emphasizing the need for sector-specific analyses. Similarly, Zviyita and Mare (2023) noted that online harassment in Namibia often includes racial and ethnic slurs, reflecting the local socio-political dynamics, which may provide valuable comparative insights for understanding the Indian context.

The current literature lacks detailed analysis on how intersecting social identities, such as caste, religion, and regional affiliations, exacerbate online harassment of women journalists in India. Although studies like those by Basu (2012) and Tewari & Mehendale (2023) provide important insights into the nature of threats and harassment, they often do not consider the compounded effects of social identities. Research by Lewis, Zamith, and Coddington (2020) and Chen et al. (2020) offer valuable perspectives but are predominantly based on Western contexts, limiting their applicability to the Indian scenario. Moreover, the effectiveness of coping mechanisms and institutional support systems specific to the Indian media landscape has not been thoroughly investigated (Rego, 2018). Addressing these gaps is essential for developing targeted interventions and policies to protect and support women journalists effectively.

This research aims to fill these gaps by providing empirical data on how cultural and social identities influence online harassment, which is crucial for developing targeted interventions. Furthermore, it evaluates the effectiveness of coping strategies and institutional support systems, proposing practical measures for improvement. By highlighting the specific vulnerabilities of women journalists in India, this study contributes to the broader discourse on media, gender, and technology.

## Methodology

**Survey Design and Distribution** A structured quantitative methodology was employed, complemented by qualitative interviews, to investigate the repercussions of social identity and political atmosphere on the online victimization of female journalists in India. A comprehensive Likert scale questionnaire was thoroughly devised, utilizing a 5-point metric ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The primary objective of this survey was to acquire thorough insights into the intricacies of online harassment dynamics.

The survey questionnaire consisted of six inquiries strategically made to evaluate the three specified research conjectures, with a pair of queries allocated to each hypothesis. These queries were intentionally formulated to directly evaluate the perceptions and encounters associated with the impact of cultural and social identities, the relationship with political occurrences, and the efficacy of coping mechanisms and institutional backing in alleviating online harassment.

Utilizing Google Forms, the survey was formulated and distributed through social networking platforms employing a convenience sampling strategy, utilizing a chain referral system facilitated by recognized journalists. This technique proved to be efficient in promptly reaching a specific demographic, particularly those vulnerable to online victimization. The Google Form was circulated among working women journalists in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh.

**Sample and Data Collection** The survey duration spanned from April 1, 2024, to April 30, 2024. Out of a total of 141 responses gathered, 113 complete responses were deemed suitable for final scrutiny. Incomplete responses were omitted to ensure the dependability and soundness of the data analysis.

**Interviews** Qualitative interviews were executed with women journalists from Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, possessing a minimum of five years of involvement with regional or national news agencies. A sum of 15 invitations were mailed, with seven journalists consenting to participate. The interview guideline encompassed 12 queries, segregated into four inquiries per aim, tailored to offer in-depth insights into each research domain. These interviews were conducted anonymously, assigning a distinct code to each journalist to encourage transparency and safeguard their confidentiality.

**Ethical Considerations** Prior ethical clearance was obtained from all contributors, delineating the study's objectives, data handling procedures, and participant entitlements, encompassing the option to withdraw from the study at any juncture. All research methodologies strictly followed ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of privacy and anonymity.

## Data Analysis

**Quantitative Analysis** of the survey data involved statistical computations, computing Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for each cluster of questions pertaining to the hypotheses to ascertain the magnitude and orientation of relationships.

**Thematic Analysis** Employing NVivo software, a thematic examination of interview responses was conducted. This process entailed categorizing the responses to detect recurrent themes and patterns pertinent to each hypothesis and aim.

**Triangulation** Triangulation was employed to corroborate the data obtained from surveys, interviews, and existing literature. This strategy strengthened the trustworthiness of the research by validating outcomes through diverse data origins and analytical methodologies.

## Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) measures the strength and direction of the association between two ranked variables. It is a non-parametric measure, meaning it does not assume a normal distribution of the data. This makes it particularly suitable for the data in this study, which involves ordinal responses on a Likert scale.

The value of  $r_s$  ranges from -1 to 1

- 1 indicates a perfect positive correlation, meaning that as one variable increases, the other variable also increases.
- -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation, meaning that as one variable increases, the other variable decreases.
- 0 indicates no correlation, meaning there is no relationship between the variables.

In this study, the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated for different sets of data to determine the relationships between social identity, political events, and the nature and frequency of online harassment.

### T-Statistic and P-Value

The T-statistic is used in hypothesis testing to determine whether the correlation coefficient is significantly different from zero (indicating no correlation). The T-statistic is calculated using the formula

$$t = \frac{r_s \sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r_s^2}}$$

where  $r_s$  is the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and  $n$  is the number of observations. The degrees of freedom (df) for this test are  $n - 2$

The P-value associated with the T-statistic indicates the probability of observing the correlation by chance under the null hypothesis (which states that there is no correlation). A P-value below 0.05 is typically considered statistically significant, meaning there is less than a 5% chance that the observed correlation occurred by random chance.

### Results

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Women journalists in India experience unique forms of online harassment on Twitter that are significantly influenced by local cultural and societal norms.

The data presented in Table 1 and Table 2 reflect a strong analysis of how social and cultural identities influence the nature of online harassment experienced by women journalists in India

#### Statistical Analysis (Table 2)

Correlation Coefficient ( $r_s$ ) of 0.97467943, Indicates a very strong positive correlation, suggesting that as perceptions of harassment being linked to social/cultural identity increase, so do perceptions of harassment change during cultural events

P-Value of 0.00481823 Significantly below the standard threshold of 0.05 for statistical significance. This strongly suggests that the correlation is not due to random chance and is statistically strong

T-Statistic of 7.54983444 This high value further supports the strength of the correlation, indicating a significant deviation from the null hypothesis

#### Hypothesis Evaluation

Women journalists in India experience unique forms of online harassment on Twitter that are significantly influenced by local cultural and societal norms

#### Conclusion, Accepted

The statistical evidence strongly supports the hypothesis, indicating that local cultural and societal norms significantly influence both the occurrence and the nature of online harassment against women journalists in India. The healthy correlation and low p-value provide compelling evidence that changes in harassment patterns are closely linked to cultural events and social identities.

#### Hypothesis Evaluation:

- Women journalists in India experience unique forms of online harassment on Twitter that are significantly influenced by local cultural and societal norms.
- **Conclusion:** Accepted. The statistical evidence strongly supports the hypothesis, indicating that local cultural and societal norms significantly influence both the occurrence and the nature of online harassment against women journalists in India. The strong correlation and low p-value provide compelling evidence that changes in harassment patterns are closely linked to cultural events and social identities.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** There is a statistically significant correlation between the political climate in India and both the frequency and nature of online harassment experienced by women journalists on Twitter.

Data Analysis of Table 3 and Table

- **Coefficient ( $r_s$ ) of 0.9:** Suggests a very strong positive correlation between how respondents perceive the frequency and severity of harassment during politically charged periods and the nature of harassment content influenced by political matters. This high correlation indicates that increases in perceived harassment frequency and severity align closely with perceptions that harassment content is politically motivated.
- **P-Value of 0.03738607:** Is below the standard threshold of 0.05, which indicates statistical significance. This means there is only a 3.74% chance that the observed correlation could occur by chance if there was no actual correlation, supporting the hypothesis's validity.

**Conclusion, Hypothesis Acceptance:** The data supports accepting Hypothesis (H2). The statistically significant correlation confirmed by the Spearman's rank correlation test suggests that the political climate significantly influences both the frequency and nature of online harassment experienced by women journalists on Twitter.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Effective coping strategies and institutional support significantly reduce the negative impact of online harassment on the mental health and professional efficacy of women journalists in India.

Data Interpretation of table 5 and 6

- **Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) of 0.9:** Indicates a very strong positive correlation between the two aspects surveyed, access to professional support systems and the utilization of coping strategies by women journalists in India. This high correlation coefficient suggests that as respondents perceive greater effectiveness in support systems, they also perceive greater effectiveness in their coping strategies.
- **Statistical Significance:** The p-value of 0.037386073 is below the conventional threshold of 0.05, suggesting that the observed correlation is statistically significant and not due to random chance. With a T-Statistic of 3.576237364 and degrees of freedom of 3, the test confirms the robustness of the correlation under the analysis settings.

**Hypothesis Testing Conclusion:** Accepted. The hypothesis that "Effective coping strategies and institutional support significantly reduce the negative impact of online harassment on the mental health and professional efficacy of women journalists in India" is supported by the data. The statistical analysis corroborates that both professional support systems and personal coping strategies play crucial roles in mitigating the effects of online harassment, aligning with the survey responses.

This analysis provides clear evidence supporting the effectiveness of coping strategies and institutional support in protecting women journalists against the adverse effects of online harassment, guiding future actions and policies in this area.

### Interview Discussion

The discourse examines the findings of expert interviews concerning the online harassment faced by women journalists, juxtaposing them with existing scholarly works to dive into the complexities of this phenomenon in India. Utilizing triangulation, this discourse combines expert insights with empirical evidence and academic analysis to present a holistic understanding of the issues and potential solutions associated with online harassment.

**Cultural and Societal Factors** Cultural and societal factors play a significant role in shaping the harassment encountered by women journalists. Expert 1 highlighted that "Women journalists who are Dalits or belong to minority religions often receive threats that are not only sexist but also caste-centric or communal in nature." This observation aligns with Chen et al. (2020), who found that similar intersections affect the seriousness of harassment across different cultural settings. Expert 2 emphasized that "A journalist from North-East India often faces racial slurs in addition to the usual gender-based harassment," illustrating regional biases that aggravate harassment. This phenomenon is also discussed by Lewis et al. (2020) concerning geographical disparities in online harassment.

**Political Landscape and Harassment** The political landscape significantly influences the character and frequency of harassment incidents. According to Expert 2, "During contentious political events like elections, the volume and severity of harassment significantly increase," which aligns with Sarikakis et al. (2021) who documented heightened online violence during periods of political turmoil. "Following the abrogation of Article 370, women journalists providing commentary on the Kashmir situation were subjected to severe online attacks," illustrating how specific political occurrences can spark targeted harassment campaigns.

**Effectiveness of Policies and Implementation Issues** Despite the presence of various policies aimed at protecting women journalists from online harassment, experts noted significant gaps in implementation. Expert 1 remarked, "Policies like the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, and the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) Scheme are in place, but they lack effective implementation." They added, "We journalists are often reluctant to complain because women are more vulnerable in our society. If we raise such issues, we are often looked at as seeking sympathy or blamed for the situation." This sentiment was echoed by Expert 5, who emphasized that societal perceptions often deter women from reporting harassment.

Experts also noted the influence of social identity on the efficacy of these policies. Expert 4 mentioned, "It's not only your gender; the state I come from and my religion play a significant role, especially in North India. Even within organizations, your caste influences how you are perceived and treated." This highlights the compounded vulnerabilities faced by women journalists from marginalized communities.

**Role of Media Organizations** The media organization for which a journalist works also significantly impacts the nature of the harassment they face. Expert 3 explained, "The channel or organization you work for affects the kind and severity of abuse you face. Working for Republic TV or Times Now subjects you to different types of trolls compared to NDTV." This indicates that the nature of online harassment is influenced by the perceived political leanings and editorial stance of the media outlet.

**Challenges in Professional Acceptance** The struggle for professional acceptance remains a persistent issue for women journalists. Expert 5 noted, "It's not easy for a woman journalist to make a place for herself in this field. People often assume that women have not achieved their positions through hard work but rather through favouritism due to their gender." This prejudice adds another layer of difficulty for women journalists, impacting their mental well-being and professional efficacy.

**Support Networks and Coping Strategies** Coping strategies and institutional backing play a crucial role in addressing online harassment effectively. Experts consistently stress the necessity of strong support from media organizations. Expert 2 emphasized, "Media organizations should shift from reactive to proactive approaches in assisting journalists confronting online harassment." This sentiment is mirrored in academic dialogues advocating for systematic strategies to combat online violence (Chen et al., 2020). As Expert 5 noted, "Without a clear framework, responses to harassment can be sporadic and ineffective."

The establishment of support networks and crisis response teams is frequently cited as effective interventions in addressing online harassment. Expert 3 stated, "Support networks empower journalists to share their experiences and coping strategies, reinforcing a collective approach to managing online threats." Scholarly research supports the claim that peer support is crucial in lessening the psychological implications of online harassment (Holton et al., 2021). Networks that promote exchange and solidarity can help journalists feel less isolated in the face of online attacks, particularly in conservative societies where female journalists may encounter additional cultural challenges (Joshi, 2023).

Various coping strategies utilized by journalists were discussed, ranging from anonymity to direct engagement with harassers. While these approaches are commonly regarded as immediate responses, they are not seen as enduring solutions to harassment (Rego, 2018). Expert 5 explained, "Direct engagement may sometimes counter harassers, but it also has the potential to escalate the situation," indicating the different nature of coping strategies and their outcomes depending on the circumstances.

Addressing coping strategies, Expert 3 noted, "Blocking and muting harassers are common but provide only temporary relief. What is crucial is a proactive organizational culture that supports journalists in dealing with harassment." This aligns with Holton et al. (2021)'s emphasis on organizational support as pivotal in mitigating the impacts of harassment. Expert 4 observed, "Many organizations lack a proactive stance, opting for ad-hoc solutions that do not tackle the root issues," echoing critiques of media responses to digital threats (Papadopoulou & Maniou, 2021).

**Utilization of Security Measures and Policy Enforcement** Efficient measures include the use of advanced security tools and the enforcement of stringent policies against harassment. Experts recommend AI-based content moderation tools to detect and block abusive content but stress the necessity of robust policies to discourage harassers. Expert 1 highlighted, "Implementing secure communication tools and features for anonymity can safeguard journalists' digital identities." This technical approach, combined with policy interventions holding harassers responsible, can significantly reduce online harassment (Papadopoulou & Maniou, 2021).

**Noteworthy Interventions** A professional shared, "Certain organizations have successfully integrated secure communication tools and anonymous reporting systems, resulting in a notable decrease in journalists' harassment" (Expert 7). This aligns with positive results documented by Lewis et al. (2020) when institutions proactively safeguard their workforce.

## Overall Discussion

The findings of this study reveal critical insights into the dynamics of online harassment faced by women journalists in India. By highlighting the significant influence of social and cultural identities, the study aligns with the broader theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and gendered digital violence. The strong correlation between cultural events and increased harassment stress upon how deeply ingrained societal norms and prejudices manifest in the digital space. This observation resonates with intersectionality theory, which posits that various social identities intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989).

Moreover, the study's confirmation of the heightened harassment during political events aligns with existing literature on the politicization of online spaces. The political climate in India, characterized by intense polarization and frequent contentious events, exacerbates the vulnerability of women journalists. This finding supports the theory of mediated conflict, which suggests that media representations and interactions are profoundly influenced by political contexts, often leading to increased aggression and hostility (Cottle, 2006).

The qualitative interviews provide fresh insights into how these dynamics play out in real-world scenarios. For instance, the compounded harassment faced by journalists from marginalized communities shows the intersectionality of gender, caste, and religion. This complexity is often overlooked in general studies of online harassment, but it is crucial for understanding the specific vulnerabilities of women journalists in India. The experiences shared by the interviewees highlight the need for more inclusive and culturally sensitive support mechanisms.

In terms of coping strategies and institutional support, the findings indicate a significant gap between the availability of policies and their effective implementation. This gap is particularly pronounced in the Indian context, where societal norms often deter women from seeking help or reporting harassment. The study's emphasis on proactive organizational support and robust anti-harassment policies echoes the recommendations of the UN's guidelines on gender equality in the media (UNESCO, 2021). It also aligns with the advocacy for stronger institutional frameworks as suggested by feminist media scholars (Holton et al., 2023).

## Conclusion

This study embarked on a comprehensive examination of the dynamics of online harassment faced by women journalists in India, aiming to uncover the influence of cultural and social identities, the impact of political events, and the effectiveness of coping strategies and institutional supports. These objectives were framed within the context of the digital communication era, which, while enhancing communication and visibility, disproportionately exposes female journalists in India to a barrage of online harassment mediated by socio-cultural norms and political pressures.

Our findings strongly confirm that social and cultural identities significantly shape the harassment landscape. Women journalists from marginalized backgrounds, such as those belonging to Dalit or minority communities, face more severe and frequent harassment. This supports our first objective, highlighting the urgent need for tailored interventions that consider these identity-specific vulnerabilities (Sarikakis et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

Moreover, the correlation between political events and increases in the frequency and severity of online harassment was clearly established, aligning with our second objective. The results emphasize the volatility of the political climate in India and its direct repercussions on the safety and freedom of women journalists. Political events, particularly contentious ones, heighten the risks and intensify the nature of online harassment, revealing the need for measures that address these politically charged environments.

Addressing our third objective, the data demonstrated that effective coping strategies and institutional support are crucial in mitigating the impacts of online harassment. However, the variation in the effectiveness of these strategies suggests that while some measures provide temporary relief, comprehensive and sustained support systems are necessary to address the ongoing nature of this harassment. The study emphasizes the importance of strong institutional backing and proactive measures from media organizations to support journalists effectively.

The study reaffirms that the digital transformation of media has indeed aggravated the challenges faced by female journalists, making them targets of gendered violence that reflects broader societal prejudices and political manipulations. The findings validate the interconnectedness of social identity and political climate with online harassment and highlight the critical role of supportive infrastructures in combating this issue. While the digital age has redefined journalism's landscape, it has also amplified risks, particularly for women in sociopolitically complex environments like India.

### **Contribution of the Study**

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on media, gender, and technology by providing empirical evidence that supports targeted policy interventions and organizational changes. It emphasizes the necessity for precise policy interventions and measures by social media platforms to tackle the issue of online harassment towards female journalists in India. The study also highlights the need for media organizations, policymakers, and social platforms to collaborate more closely to forge environments that safeguard and empower women journalists, ensuring that the freedom of the press is upheld without compromising the safety and well-being of its practitioners.

**New Findings and Their Importance** The study's new findings reveal that overlapping social identities, including caste, religion, and regional affiliations, exacerbate online harassment of women journalists in India. These findings are crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies that can effectively safeguard women journalists, ensuring their safety and mental well-being. Additionally, the study highlights the role of institutional support systems in mitigating these effects, which has not been comprehensively studied before. Addressing this gap is essential for upholding the principles of free and fair journalism in India's complex socio-political landscape.

### **Practical Implications and Recommendations**

#### **For Media Organizations:**

- **Robust Anti-Harassment Policies:** Media organizations should develop and enforce clear anti-harassment policies that include guidelines for reporting abuse, both offline and online, and mechanisms for swift and fair resolution of complaints. The BBC's 'Respect@BBC' policy is a comprehensive example that aims to create a safe and respectful working environment.
- **Training and Resources:** Providing training on digital safety, mental health support, and legal rights can empower journalists to better protect themselves. The Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network offers resources and training on digital security that could be beneficial.
- **Support Systems:** Establishing support systems, such as peer support networks and access to counselling services, can help journalists cope with the stress and trauma of harassment. The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma offers resources and training on trauma support for journalists.

#### **For Policymakers:**

- **Legislation and Regulation:** Policymakers can play a crucial role by enacting laws that specifically address online harassment and abuse, ensuring that they are gender-sensitive and include provisions for the protection of journalists. The EU's Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online is an example of a policy that aims to tackle hate speech on digital platforms.
- **Awareness and Education Campaigns:** Governments can support campaigns that raise awareness about the impact of harassment on journalists and promote a culture of respect and tolerance. The #NoPlaceForHate campaign by the OSCE is an initiative aimed at combating hate speech.



#### For Social Platforms:

- **Strengthening Reporting Mechanisms:** Social media platforms should improve their reporting mechanisms for abuse and ensure that reports are reviewed promptly and effectively. Twitter's Trust and Safety team and Facebook's Community Standards Enforcement are examples of platforms working to address abuse.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Platforms should be more transparent about their policies and practices regarding content moderation and provide regular reports on actions taken against abusive content. The Santa Clara Principles on Transparency and Accountability in Content Moderation offer guidelines for platforms to follow.

**Implementation in India:** For Indian media organizations to effectively safeguard women journalists, they could adapt the above strategies by:

- Collaborating with international organizations like the BBC, Poynter Institute, and Dart Center to tailor their resources and training programs to the Indian context.
- Advocating for the adoption of international best practices in Indian legislation, such as the EU's approach to online hate speech, while ensuring these are culturally relevant and enforceable.
- Encouraging Indian social media platforms to adopt and adapt the transparency and accountability measures outlined in the Santa Clara Principles, ensuring they are culturally sensitive and effective in the Indian digital ecosystem.

By adopting these strategies, Indian media organizations, policymakers, and social platforms can work together to create a safer environment for women journalists, promoting a more inclusive and democratic society.

**Future Research** Despite the comprehensive nature of this study, several limitations present opportunities for future research. Firstly, the use of convenience sampling may not fully represent the diverse experiences of female journalists across different regions of India, especially those in more rural or less urbanized areas. Future studies should employ more randomized and stratified sampling techniques to ensure broader representation and generalizability of findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of online harassment on the mental health and professional trajectories of women journalists.

Further research should also explore the intersectionality of harassment by examining how various identities—such as caste, religion, sexual orientation, and regional affiliations—compound the experiences of online harassment. This could involve more complex qualitative studies that research personal narratives and contextual factors influencing harassment.

Moreover, investigating the role of media organizations and their policies in greater depth could reveal more about the effectiveness of different support mechanisms. Comparative studies across different media houses, both within India and internationally, could identify best practices and effective interventions. Finally, exploring the impact of emerging technologies, such as AI and machine learning, on detecting and preventing online harassment could provide innovative solutions to this pervasive issue.

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#### Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical standards of the ethics committee of Lovely Professional University. All participants provided informed consent, ensuring their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses were maintained throughout the research process.

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#### List of tables

Table 1: Impact of Social and Cultural Identity on Online Harassment of Women Journalists in India

Description	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Q1: Harassment Related to Social/Cultural Identity	5	13	25	61	9	113
Q2: Harassment Changes During Cultural Events	3	11	19	68	12	113
Rank 1 (Harassment Related to Social/Cultural Identity)	1	2.5	4	5	2.5	
Rank 2 (Harassment Changes During Cultural Events)	1	2	4	5	3	

Table 2: Statistical Analysis of Cultural Influences on Online Harassment of Women Journalists in India, Spearman's Rank Correlation Results

Metric	Value	Description
Correlation Coefficient (r_s)	0.97467943	Spearman's rank correlation coefficient indicating the strength and direction of the monotonic relationship between the ranked variables.
(N)	5	Number of ranked pairs used in the analysis, corresponding to the distinct pairs from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."
T-Statistic	7.54983444	Test statistic for the correlation used to assess the significance of the correlation coefficient relative to the noise in the data
(DF)	3	Degrees of freedom associated with the significance test of the correlation, calculated as N-2 (where N is the number of observation pairs).
P-Value	0.00481823	Probability of observing the correlation by chance under the null hypothesis, indicating the statistical significance of the results.

Table 3: Survey Responses and Rankings Perceptions of Harassment Frequency and Nature Related to Political Climate

Response for Q1 (Perception of Harassment Frequency and Severity)	Response for Q2 (Nature of Harassment Content)	Rank 1 (Perception of Harassment Frequency and Severity)	Rank 2 (Nature of Harassment Content)
7	9	1	1
18	13	4	3
16	17	3	4
58	63	5	5
14	11	2	2

Table 4: Statistical Analysis of the Correlation Between Political Climate and Online Harassment of Women Journalists on Twitter, Spearman's Rank Correlation Results

Statistic	Value	Description
Total Sample Size (n)	113	Total number of respondents in the study
(N)	5	Number of pairs from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" used in the correlation analysis
Coefficient (r_s)	0.9	Spearman's rank correlation coefficient
T-Statistic	3.576237	Test statistic for the correlation
(DF)	3	Degrees of freedom Calculated based on N-2
P-Value	0.037386	Indicates the significance of the observed correlation

Table 5: Survey Data on Support Systems and Coping Strategies, Responses and Rankings

Description	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
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Q1: Access to Support Systems	5	13	25	61	9	113
Q2: Utilizing Coping Strategies	3	11	19	68	12	113
Rank 1 (Support Systems)	1	3	4	5	2	
Rank 2 (Coping Strategies)	1	2	4	5	3	

Table 6: Statistical Analysis of the Correlation Between Access to Support Systems and Utilizing Coping Strategies, Spearman's Rank Correlation Results

Metric	Value	Description
Coefficient (r_s)	0.9	Spearman's rank correlation coefficient
(N)	5	Number of ranked pairs used in the analysis
T-Statistic	3.57623736	Test statistic for the correlation
Degrees of Freedom	3	Degrees of freedom associated with the test
P-Value	0.03738607	Probability of observing the correlation by chance