

**A GENDER SENSITIVE CODE
OF ETHICS
FOR THE PRINT MEDIA
IN PAKISTAN**

Prepared by:



Supported by:



genderequalityproject

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RIGHT TO PRIVACY

- Caution against identification should be employed in cases involving rape, abduction, acid throwing incidents, sexual assault on children or news regarding HIV/AIDS. Names and photographs of the victims, or other particulars indicating their identity, should not be published.
- Due restraint should be observed while reporting official visits to victims of rape/sexual assault.
- In events relating to a VIP giving away charity, the event should not be presented in a promotional manner. Pictures of the recipients of charity or 'zakat' should not be published.
- Maintain the secrecy of the sources of confidential information.

PICTORIAL DEPICTION OF WOMEN

- Wherever possible pictures of glamorous women are to be replaced with pictures of women who have achieved successes in various fields.
- There is a pressing need to remove disproportionate pictures of foreign women in skimpy sports wear and beauty contests etc. and replace it with positive portrayal of local women in sports.
- Uncaptioned pictures of women appearing in most newspapers (at events and gatherings) need to be published with the permission of the subjects.

RECTIFYING UNDER REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

- Short term as well as long-term goals need to be outlined for achieving gender equilibrium in the newspaper workplaces. As a short-term goal, newspaper owners/editors should be urged to include 1/3rd women in their offices.
- Work environment of newspaper offices needs to be made conducive for women journalists. In this regards, there is a need to strictly implement a sexual harassment code in all newspaper offices.
- Women journalists should be made to cover a variety of issues and not merely be relegated to covering women-oriented issues.
- In news items (stories, opinions, columns, features) calling for opinions/quotations from consumers/public/expert authorities, the views of women need to be reflected along with their male counterparts. The voices of women need to be reflected in news pertaining to a variety of issues and not just women-specific issues.

PROJECTION OF GENDER ROLES IN ADVERTISEMENTS

- Advertisements from sexologists (offering potency dugs etc.) and quacks should not be published by newspaper. Not only do these ads indirectly signal violence and sexual aggression but also portray a false image of masculinity, equating it with

physical prowess.

- Maximum restraint should be exercised regarding the publication of vulgar and provocative ads of movies.
- There is a growing need for advertising agencies to project healthy gender roles. i.e. show men engaged in domestic activities and involved with children as well as discourage the commodification of women's images in advertisements of shaving creams, cigarettes, tyres etc.

QUALITY COVERAGE OF WOMEN ISSUES

- There is a strong need to highlight serious issues facing women i.e. drug abuse, disability, trafficking.
- Rather than talk about physical attributes (dress, hairstyle, beauty) of a person (man or woman) emphasis should be on the event they have been featured in.
- Women working in all professions should be treated with honour e.g. Acting, nursing, air hosting, activism

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- Judgmental words and phrases should not be used in news reports. Only the facts should be given.
- Newspapers have every right to report on controversial issues but maximum caution should be exercised to ensure that:
 - o The event is not distorted to tilt public opinion
 - o The use of judgmental words and opinions is avoided
 - o If a certain aspect of the story needs highlighting, reporters should reflect the opinions of the public rather than projecting their own. The opposing point of view should also be reflected.
- There should be a comprehensive criteria determining 'news worthiness' which needs to be debated within the organisational structure of a newspaper. Are elopement cases, which do not fall under any major news category (i.e. politics, business, crime) worth reporting at all?
- The marital status of a women and the number of her children need not be mentioned in rape or elopement cases.
- A whole list of gender insensitive vocabulary like “kanwaari maan”, “khoobroo dosheeza” etc. should be replaced with an alternative gender sensitive vocabulary.
- Follow up to a crime story also needs to be highlighted i.e. if the perpetrators of a certain crime were convicted or not.