



GENDER & MEDIA WATCH

February 2025



A monthly round-up of news stories about women and women's representation in Pakistan's news industry

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Rise of Women in Digital Media: Are TikTok and YouTube Redefining Female Narratives?

In Pakistan's deeply patriarchal media landscape, where women's voices have long been muted or distorted, a quiet revolution is unfolding. On platforms like TikTok and YouTube, women are telling their stories, challenging rigid social norms, and reclaiming their identities in ways that mainstream media has systematically denied them.

From discussing mental health and body positivity to calling out misogyny and violence, female content creators are pushing boundaries and reshaping narratives. Yet, this bold digital empowerment comes at a dangerous cost - relentless online harassment, slut-shaming, and threats of violence. And as Pakistani women continue to carve out space in the digital world, the state remains woefully unprepared to protect them.

Creators have used TikTok to build massive followings, while YouTubers are fostering honest conversations about women's experiences. These women are not just influencers - they are cultural disruptors, challenging stereotypes and pushing back against the one-dimensional portrayal of women in traditional media.

However, the backlash has been brutal. Women who dare to be visible are met with trolling, slut-shaming, doxxing, and threats of physical violence. In some cases, the attacks have spilled offline, as was seen in the tragic murder of social media star Qandeel Baloch in 2016.

The message is clear: Women may be allowed visibility, but only on society's terms. Step out of line - speak too loudly, laugh too freely, exist too boldly - and the digital patriarchy will strike back with a vengeance.

Pakistan's cybercrime law, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, was meant to protect citizens from online abuse. Instead, it has been weaponized against activists and journalists, while offering little to no protection for women facing digital violence.

This is where Uks Research Centre's initiative, Safe Words, Safer World, becomes critical. As part of its ongoing work on gender and media, Uks collaborated with WACC to tackle the alarming rise in digital abuse faced by women and gender minorities in Pakistan.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The initiative focuses on creating safer online spaces, documenting misogynistic abusive vocabulary in Urdu and Punjabi, and pushing for policy reforms that protects victims.

While local law enforcement has failed women, international platforms like TikTok and YouTube have also done little to shield Pakistani female creators from abuse. Content moderation policies are weak, and reporting mechanisms often lack cultural context, leaving women vulnerable to targeted attacks.

If social media platforms want to support Pakistani women's empowerment, they must invest more in local moderation teams, establish stronger policies against gender-based harassment, and provide content creators with tools to filter and block abusive comments.

Despite the threats, Pakistani women are refusing to be silenced. They are building communities, telling stories, and reshaping what it means to be a woman in this country. But this fight cannot be fought alone.

We need structural change — stronger implementation of cybercrime laws, gender-sensitive law enforcement, and safer digital platforms. Initiatives like Safe Words, Safer World are critical in this battle, but without the backing of the state and tech giants, the burden will continue to fall on the shoulders of women who are already risking their safety to speak out.

The rise of women in digital media is one of the most powerful cultural shifts of our time. But if we fail to protect these voices, we risk losing not just individual creators, but an entire generation of women who are daring to rewrite the narrative - and reclaim their power - one post at a time.

MAJOR STORIES

*Click on the heading to read the full story

01
February
Dawn

PODA CALLS FOR PROJECTING RURAL WOMEN'S VOICES

Emphasising the importance of amplifying rural women's voices through the platform of the Annual Rural Women Conference, Executive Director of Potohar Organisation for Development Advocacy (Poda) Sameena Nazir expressed appreciation for Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's efforts to protect women's and girls' rights. She was speaking at the launching meeting of the report of the 17th Annual Rural Women Conference organised by Poda from 22 to 24 October 2024 in Islamabad. Highlighting the conference proceedings, she said that the event brought together over 2,376 mainly rural women from 130 districts across Pakistan.



04
February
Daily Times

LHC DIRECTS AUTHORITIES TO MAKE DECISION ON APPLICATION ABOUT AURAT MARCH

The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday directed the Additional Deputy Commissioner Lahore to decide on an application regarding the Aurat March after hearing the petitioners' stance and submit a report by February 6. Justice Anwaar Hussain issued the orders while hearing a contempt of court petition filed by women activists Leena Ghani, Neelum Hussain, Fatima Jaan, and Shireen Umair against Deputy Commissioner Syed Moosa Raza and other officials.



06
February
The Nation

VOCATIONAL CENTRE FOR WOMEN SET UP IN LACHI

A Vocational Training Center (VTC) exclusively for women has been established in Lachi Tehsil under the Kohat Division Development Project (KDDP).

The center provides specialized training in sewing, beauty, and computer skills, according to a press release issued here. A total of 260 women will be trained at the center within a year. The women will be divided into four batches, each with 65 trainees, focusing on developing skills in dress designing, beauty and skin care, and computer skills.



10
February
The News

RABIA, ZAINAB MAKE HISTORY IN ASIAN PARA-CYCLING

Two female cyclists secured medals in the Asian Road & Para Cycling 2025 event underway in Bangkok (Thailand), marking a historic moment for the country.

Rabia Gharib and Zainab Rizwan made Pakistan proud with their stellar performances in the Women's Master Individual Time Trial. Rabia, while representing SSGC, clinched a silver medal in the 50 and above category with a time of 18:44.515 and an average speed of 34.25 km/h.



MAJOR STORIES

*Click on the heading to read the full story

11
February
Daily Times

DR ZEELAF MUNIR ELECTED NEW CHAIRPERSON OF PBC

The Board of Directors of the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) in its meeting of February 7th, 2025, elected Dr. Zeelaf Munir as its new chairperson for a tenure of 18 months. Dr. Zeelaf previously served as the Vice Chairperson of PBC. She succeeds Shabbir Diwan, the CEO of Gatron (Industries) Limited. The board also elected Mr. Ziad Bashir, the CEO of Gul Ahmed Textiles as the vice chairman.



12
February
Express Tribune

NA PANEL CALLS FOR WOMEN RIGHTS REFORMS

The National Assembly Special Committee on Gender Mainstreaming on Tuesday urged the immediate establishment of the National Commission on the Status of Women at the federal level. It also called for the formation of provincial commissions and Gender Mainstreaming Committees to ensure the enforcement of equal rights as guaranteed by the Constitution. Chaired by MNA Dr. Nafisa Shah, the committee recommended the development of consistent and synchronized data to support gender mainstreaming and reporting at national and international levels.



15
February
The Nation

GENDER DISPARITY IN GOVT JOBS CONTINUES TO BE MAJOR CHALLENGE

The issue of gender disparity in government jobs continues to be a major challenge, with women facing significant barriers to equal opportunities in employment, pay, and career progression. Despite a series of reforms and policies aimed at promoting gender equality, the representation of women in public sector departments remains strikingly low, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



17
February
Dawn

HARASSMENT OF MALAKAND VARSITY STUDENT SPARKS OUTRAGE

The alleged harassment of a female student by a teacher at University of Malakand (UoM) is making rounds on the social media and has sparked outrage among people. The harassment case surfaced when a female student of Urdu department approached Jehan Bakht Shaheed police station, Pul Chowki, Malakand district and registered an FIR against a teacher. She nominated Abdul Haseeb, a lecturer in political science department of the university in the FIR.



MAJOR STORIES

*Click on the heading to read the full story

22
February
Express
Tribune

ALISHBA KHAN BARECH NAMED FOR GLOBAL AWARDED

Alishba Khan Barech from Nushki, Balochistan has been selected as a finalist for the 2025 Women Changing the World Awards. Among 751 shortlisted nominations, the judges have selected Alishba Khan Barech as a finalist for the Young Woman of the Year Award, recognizing her extraordinary contributions to literature, advocacy, and youth empowerment, said a press release issued here Friday. Hailing from Nushki, near the Afghan border—a region often associated with militancy



24
February
The News

MAN LETS GAMBLERS RAPE WIFE AFTER LOSING BET

A shocking incident took place at Basti Dad Kamelra where a man allegedly handed over his wife to gamblers after losing a bet, resulting in a case of sexual assault.

According to an FIR registered at Sahuka police station, victim's father Muhammad Ashraf, a resident of Chak 31/KB, alleged that his son-in-law Abid Zain after losing a bet invited the accused to his house and allowed M Quresh to rape his wife while M Quresh's accomplice Inzamamul Haq filmed the incident.



26
February
The Nation

FJWU ENTREPRENEURSHIP FAIR 2025 EMPOWERS WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND FOSTER BUSINESS INNOVATION

Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), through its Business Incubation Center (BIC), successfully organized a two-day Entrepreneurship Fair on February 25-26, 2025, aimed at fostering micro-entrepreneurship development. The event served as a vibrant platform for startups, alumni, women entrepreneurs, industry leaders, collaborators, and sponsors to connect, learn, and explore business growth opportunities.



FATIMA JINNAH WOMEN UNIVERSITY

28
February
Daily
Times

TESSORI REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

In a significant move towards promoting women's empowerment, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori reiterated his dedication to supporting women's independence and growth at the 15th Ladies Fund Women Awards 2025, held at Governor House. The Governor emphasized that empowering women economically and fostering their business development and prosperity remain top priorities of his office, according to a news release on Thursday.



EDITORIAL ON GENDER

What have editors said about gender issues in Pakistan? Click on the boxes and find out!

DAWN

[Fertility puzzle](#)

['Pause' in US aid](#)

[Held back](#)

[Childhood trauma](#)

[Hollow words](#)

DAILY TIMES

[Rights and Wrongs](#)

[Mispriorities](#)

[Safe Space](#)

[A Cancerous Blight](#)

[Child, Chocolate, Choke](#)

[Workplace Harassment](#)

[Punjab's Prime Peak](#)

THE NATION

[Heinous Crimes](#)

[Protecting Students](#)

[Protecting Victims](#)

THE NEWS

[STEM gender gap](#)

[We need to know](#)

[HIV in children](#)

[SC on harassment](#)

EXPRESS TRIBUNE

[Population growth disaster](#)

[A government without women](#)

[Domestic workers abuse](#)

[Misuse of foreign SIMs](#)

[Sindh's HIV problem](#)

[GBV and low conviction rate](#)

[Deadly strings](#)

[Healthcare on the brink](#)

STORIES IN THE DIGITAL SPHERE

A roundup of this month's trends and viral stories on gender-related issue on Pakistan's internet

#AmericanLadyinPakistan

A 33-year-old American woman, captivated social media users. She travelled to Karachi to marry 19-year-old Pakistani man she had met online. Her situation sparked extensive discussions and quickly went viral online.



#Transgender Empowerment

A culinary school in Lahore is offering a free six-month training program for Pakistan's transgender community, helping them build careers in the food industry. The first batch of 25 students began in January, with another group starting in February.



MEDIA STATISTICS

Data derived from media-monitoring throughout
January 2025

| | Total | Daily Times | The News | Dawn | Express Tribune | The Nation |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------|----------|------|-----------------|------------|
| Women Specific Stories (WSS) | 904 | 136 | 229 | 168 | 221 | 150 |
| Front Page WSS | 46 | 4 | 22 | 6 | 10 | 4 |
| Back Page WSS | 80 | 29 | 25 | 10 | 29 | 15 |
| Women Specific Columns | 30 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 9 | 7 |
| Columns by Women Writers | 130 | 28 | 35 | 35 | 24 | 8 |
| Women Specific Editorials | 19 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Female Reporters (FR) | 292 | 6 | 147 | 67 | 66 | 6 |
| Front Page FR | 20 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Back Page FR | 11 | 0 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

| Comparative Mean | | | | | |
|------------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|
| | WSS | Editorial(WSS) | Female Reporter | Columns (WSS) | Columns by Women |
| Daily Times | 4.387097 | 1 | 0.1935484 | 0.032258 | 0.90322581 |
| The News | 7.387097 | 1 | 4.7419355 | 0.322581 | 1.12903226 |
| Daily Dawn | 5.419355 | 1 | 2.1612903 | 0.096774 | 1.12903226 |
| Express Tribune | 7.129032 | 1 | 2.1290323 | 0.290323 | 0.77419355 |
| The Nation | 4.83871 | 1 | 0.1935484 | 0.225806 | 0.25806452 |

1. Women-specific includes all the news stories, columns and editorials that are dedicated to women's achievements, problems, status etc.

2. All female sources that are named and not named (such as lady reporter) are considered female reporters.

PICTURES OF THE MONTH



Islamabad: Journalist stage protest demonstration against PECA amendment Bill 2025

Courtesy: The Nation

Islamabad: Beautifully decorated Euro Village Being inaugurated at PNCA



Courtesy: The News



Islamabad: Coordinator to the prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam Addresses the seminar held at a local hotel

Courtesy: Dawn

PICTURES OF THE MONTH



Islamabad: Girls taking Photographs during EuroVillage in pakistan national council of arts

Courtesy: The News

Islamabad: A visitor tends to a dog at the wonka's chocolate festival at the PNCA

Courtesy: Dawn



Thatta: Female students of liaquat institute of medical and health sciences taking oath during the white coat ceremony for the first batch of MBBS

Courtesy: The Nation



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GenderWatch

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