

Women in Administration: A Major Link to Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Society generally tends to have a skeptical view on whether women should be left free to take up administrative posts or not. With so many provisions made by the government to ensure that women do actively take up administrative roles, there is a lot of scope for improvement, which still needs to be done to let women do so. This paper highlights the under-representation of women in administrative roles, the hurdles preventing their representation and the recommendations to overcome these hurdles.

Keywords- Administration, Women Representation, Barriers, Feminine

INTRODUCTION

Administration refers to the discharge of executive functions by the State. It is the government body vested with the power and responsibility of achieving the national goals concerned with the implementation of laws proposed, passed and seconded by the three pillars of democracy, viz: the legislature, Executive and Judiciary. The administration deals with several consequential decisions of the government pertaining to politics, economy, etc. The administration is also instrumental in the allocation and expenditure of the budget. To ensure that the government issues gender-inclusive policies for Indian citizens, it is very important that there is equal representation of both genders at the decision-making level. There has been a perpetual under-representation of females in public administration around the world

in various public sector organizations. The under-representation of women apparently reflects the fact that there exists a dearth of leadership and decision-making opportunities for females.

In certain parts of the world like the Middle East nations, where patriarchy forms a substantial part of the culture, the functions of the women in salaried services is stunted by their socio-cultural and religious norms. The under-representations of women in public administrations bring to the limelight the concepts of horizontal and vertical gender segregation.

1. Vertical occupational gender segregation is what is generally called 'glass ceilings', considering that ceilings segregate the space vertically. This covers women striving hard to reach the upper pedestals in decision-making and leadership. In many public

administrative hierarchies, the females are seen to occupy a lower stratum in terms of pay and responsibility and as a consequence of which they have suboptimal career trajectories.

2. Horizontal occupational gender segregation is when the females are concentrated in particular sectors of the public administrations, mainly in the health and educational sectors. It's a fancy term to denote intra-professional gender segregation. This is popularly known as 'glass walls', considering that walls segregate the space horizontally. The gender bias is based on the stereotypes that women should be assigned the jobs that are considered feminine and majorly involves caring roles, hence barring their entry into certain other professions of the public administration that are better suited for men. For example, in research universities, women tend to be concentrated in lecturer roles, evaluation of assignments, managing the logistics required in the research at hand, while it is the men who are engaged in the actual research work. This paper considers several authentic sources for reference and has concluded that women have faced grave under-representation issues in public administrative institutions. This under-representation has many far-reaching consequences with respect to the making of public policies and delivery of services.

The paper, therefore, first outlines the research method used to provide evidence for the argument. Second, the paper provides a review of extant research and literature on representative bureaucracy to substantiate the argument. Finally,

the paper concludes with a research agenda and the view that the continued under-representation of women (and other minorities) in public bureaucracies undermines the performance and trust in public institutions.

CURRENT TRENDS

Women Officers in the Indian Administrative Service

The very first AIS (All India Services- Indian Administrative Services) competitive examinations for IAS (Indian Administrative Services) and IPS (Indian Police Services) were held for Independent India in 1948. Till 1950, IAS was an examination dominated completely by men. It was in 1951 that the first Indian Woman qualifies for the IAS examinations.

The Indian Constitution didn't quite ensure equality to the female IAS aspirants as it guaranteed to every Indian citizen. As per the Indian Administrative Service Rules of 1954, "no married women shall be appointed to the service and resign from the service in the event of marriage." This discriminatory provision was removed from the constitution, really late in 1972, which allowed the married woman to join the Indian Administrative Services. Besides, a provision of maternity leave was added to this rule.

According to the Civil Lists published by the Department of Personnel and Training

The government of India delineates that the number of women entering IAS is not very appreciable, and the statistics have shown undulating figures. On analyzing the data, we have for the past few years, we see that one woman got into IAS in 1951. Ten years hence in 1961, the situations did not ameliorate much, and one

woman got into the services. Cut to the year 2000, the number of women entering the services showed a minimal rise, and we had nine women entering IAS. In the gap between the aforementioned years, there have been random surges and dips in the number of women entering the administrative services and the variation following no particular pattern.

In the contemporary period, female IAS officers are not excluded from any particular posting within the service. They are working at all locations across the country and occupying different echelons in the public administrative hierarchy.

Women Officers in the Indian Police Service

Women were banned from recruitment to Indian Police Services till the year 1971. It was in the year 1972 that this bigoted rule was eliminated to make the first woman enter the Indian Police Services. According to the figures in the Police Lists produced by the Department of Home Affairs, the female representation in IPS has been found to be abysmally low. Though the number of women in IPS is awfully meagre, the very few making it to the services have been proving their mettle and enlisting accolades and honour to their respective names fair and square.

Women Officers in the Indian Forest Service

Indian Forest Services lagged way behind its contemporary services, i.e., IAS and IPS, when it comes to women's admission. IFS were an all-male Service until 1980, when it witnessed the entry of its first female officer. As per The Indian Forest Service Civil Lists published by the Ministry of Environment and Forest and the Government of India, the number of women getting into this Service is terribly low.

BARRIERS TO FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

There are legions of odds against the women who are struggling to make it to certain public services and subsequently struggling more to ascend to higher ranks in the system. These obstacles vary from bigotry, favoritism, discrimination, intimidation at the workplace, stereotypes regarding gender roles, conflicts between professional and family-life responsibilities to complex system layouts of the organization, evaluation of performance and other similar norms. The bias against women arises from the flawed construct of gender that still exists in society. Gender is defined as the ethics and principles that the society designates to biological categories of male and female. Sex roles are translated into gender roles in society and in the place of work. Gender includes virtues and standards ascribed to femininity and masculinity. Femininity is closely linked with roles related to reproduction, domestic and maternal care. Patriarchy is so deeply-seated in Indian society that it has segregated the jobs that people should do, and the segregation is based on gender. Men occupying the upper stratum and the women settling themselves for the subordinate roles are something that gets much normalized in the patriarchal ambiance that we live in. Society regards behavioral traits of fierceness, assertiveness and leadership attributed to the males to be above the traits associated with care and nurturance ascribed to the females.

It is popularly debated that the public administrative life that involves a lot of mental and physical fatigue is considered to be a male realm

and women compromising with the secondary roles. According to King (1995), there are four ways in which the male dominance in the public administrative services exhibits itself: (1) The administration is a masculine domain as men are most likely to occupy the leadership positions. (2) The administration is a male-dominated realm as the preference of males over females is embedded in the culture. (3) The common beliefs of being assertive and aggressive as the desirable characteristics of a person in leadership and management roles seem to put males before females for such roles. (4) The state is the domain of males, and therefore the politics, governance, administrative and political state are examples of embedded cultural preference of males over females.

Behaviors like concern for people, kindness, sympathy, nurturing and being gentle are characteristics associated with femininity and are usually undervalued in administrative works, which prefer behaviors like assertiveness, aggression, independence, dominance and control. Even the work processes are more centered around the masculinity traits and thus further strengthen the male dominance in the administrative organizations.

Most barriers to women's overall career progression in public administrations roots from the social stigma related to gender, where masculinity is generally valued. The end result of the lack of representation in public administrations is demonstrated by extant research of representative bureaucracies. It is only then when the policymakers include a broad spectrum of the population, then societal interests as a whole will be included in the policy process. The deficit of

input in policy-making causes erroneous decisions to be made, thereby resulting in poor policy outcomes, service delivery and organizational performance in various sectors of the public administration.

There is an argument by some of the scholars that due to women being experienced in their roles as mothers and nurturers and to fulfill the expectations of the society that they will do justice to these rules, the majority of the women prioritize meeting the expectations of the society before their professional career.

Carol Gilligan (1982) was the first one among the scholars to bring forth the argument that women tend to see the social reality from a different perspective wherein they put more emphasis on interpersonal relations, whereas on the other hand, men have an altogether different perspective and they lay focus on adherence of rules, justice and individualism as impartiality. The general opinion of the public is to see this division as normal and perceives the masculine behaviour as more assertive while the feminine approach is seen to be as self-sacrificing.

Empirical studies have illustrated that men and women have an altogether different approach to leadership, although the variations are generally qualified in important ways. An earlier meta-analysis of organizational and studies related to leadership styles have shown that women were more likely to be democratic leaders than men. However, the later studies have shown that women were found to have exceeded men on the scale of individualized consideration, while vice-versa was seen in active management by exception and laissez-faire leadership.

Notable differences in the leadership styles of different genders have been documented in various studies, which revolved mainly around the public sector representation of different genders. The conclusion of the research done on gender and leadership clearly portrays that subtle variations in the leadership approaches exist, but these differences are utterly eliminated from the distinct division of set standards.

IMPROVING REPRESENTATION

The bringing up of the Indian societies up till the late 1900s had been in the line of the orthodox thinking that women should remain confined in the four walls of the house. They were considered to be the homemakers, and the pleasure was in seeing them doing all the household chores, bringing up the children and taking care of old parents. It was only in the later years of the 20th century that women stepped out of their confined zones and took up jobs in the administration field, thereby contributing to society in an altogether different manner. Yet, the ratio of men and women in elite jobs remains a matter of concern. There have been many reforms brought up to increase the number of women in this particular field yet, there is much more which still needs to be done.

The first thing which should be given prime importance is to create awareness in the society and remove all sorts of misconception regarding the involvement of women in these services. The mentality of men should change, and they should be taught to consider their better halves as equal and should support them in maintaining a balance between workplace and home. The in-laws and other members of the family should also work in enhancing the lady of their house to reach the horizon in their career. Talking about this, the

main role has to be played by the family members, and social campaigns and awareness programs need to be organized by the concerned organizations to teach them. It is through this means that people all across society will become familiar with women working at par with men.

Another important aspect that needs to be looked upon is preparing women to take up these roles. Looking broader into this, it includes both providing sufficient aids in education and also creating spaces for them which in turn be looked upon as an opportunity for themselves to outshine. Deeper into this, it may involve providing grounds to the women through which they get proper coaching which will help them crack the entrance exams required for entering into these high-profile jobs.

Another role has to be played by the government wherein they are supposed to consider the fact that women have children and they have to pay equal importance to them as well. Hence, the job profile needs to be such that it doesn't demand a lot from the women. And specifically, the job has to be such that it doesn't give a lot of mental pressure to them, which will ensure that they look after young toddlers on a daily basis.

The most essential of all these comes the changing the thought process of women, and they need to be educated as well to take up such jobs. The concerned should take the responsibility of teaching the women to be specific about their goal, and it needs to be emphasized that women need to be self-dependent and should be able to talk about their career to their family members in a very free one-to-one communication. They should be taught to have the right attitude and develop a positive

stance. They could be given examples of great women personalities in this particular field.

Given that these things are followed, it can be said that the number of women in administrative jobs could increase manifold.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to our research, the number of female officers entering the administrative services is not as overwhelming as it should be. Realizing the importance of a woman's opinion in policymaking, there are certain steps that have been taken in this direction but of no avail. Some of the suggested measures to further the entry of women officers in All India Services are:

- i. Spreading awareness and parallel doing away with the misconstrued information pertaining to women in the services.
- ii. Improving the female literacy rate in the country and prescribe the syllabus designed in line with civil services right from the High school level.
- iii. Making education affordable to the non-privileged masses through scholarships and fee remissions and providing free primary education compulsorily to everyone.
- iv. Establishing a national school that shall tutor women to get into AIS. The entry into this school shall be based on merit-based examinations and shall charge somewhere between no to nominal fees.
- v. Making quarterly or bi-annually career counselling sessions mandatory at academic institutions. This shall ensure that students are well-informed about their career trajectories before they embark on them. This shall ensure that they opt it out of their genuine interest and not because of peer pressure.
- vi. Reservation for those who are financially impoverished, constitutionally privileged or specially-abled.
- vii. Taking small steps to make the working conditions favorable for women.
- viii. Bringing out changes in the mindset of parents and society, considering women inferior and pressing them to be family-oriented and not career-oriented.
- ix. Shunning the orthodox customs and obligations that the society ascribes the women to.
- x. Ensuring that the success stories of the women who have joined the services and done great work for the country reach the masses. The respect and advantages that the women are accredited to shall make the people motivate their daughters to be a part of the services.

The study reveals that after the entry into AISs, the main problem the women officers face is to balance their work at home and office, and the researcher suggests the following measures: -

- i. Women should not be unambiguous at their respective homes about their resolution to pursue a career, excel in the same and not stunt their ambitions by compromising with subordinate roles. They should outline a plan to divide their time between both work and family according to it. Also, they should have emergency rescue plans already thought of for any unforeseen circumstances that may arise. They should be transparent to their families about any short-term work pressures that they might be experiencing. This would avoid

conflicts in the family that are begotten by misunderstandings.

- ii. The thought process of men needs to be transformed so that they view their female colleagues as their equals. They should understand enough to realize that balancing both family and office is a difficult task, and more importantly, they should be compassionate enough to voluntarily reach to the aid of their female colleagues as and when required.
- iii. The spouse and in-laws of the female officers should respect, acknowledge and bolster their ambition to be a part of the administration and law-making. The support and motivation of the family members could serve as great stepping stones in their careers.
- iv. The government could provide nursemaids to the female officers with small kids. Feeding, cleaning, entertaining the child is a Herculean task. The nursemaid shall lighten the responsibilities of the officers by a great amount. The nursemaid could do these odd jobs for the kids, and then the female officers would be left with only the major responsibilities of the child. This step shall certainly help the women officers to be more focused on their jobs. This provision becomes very crucial when the officers get field duty or on an official tour.
- v. Families need to be very supportive of these women officers in the long-term. They should be proud of their daughters/daughters-in-law as they command an opinion in the policy-making that will affect the Indian populace. They should make this apparent to their daughter/daughter-in-law that they're proud of what she is doing, and this pride is so much

more important than their absence in certain family functions due to professional commitments. The family should try and create a conducive environment at home so that the officers aren't consumed with the guilt that the adverse ambience at their homes is due to their inability to bind it together.

The study identifies that woman officers do not have sufficient time to spend with the family. The researcher suggests that:

- i. Women are considered to be home-makers in our country. It's their feminine essence and warmth that keeps the different members conglomerated into a family. They need to make sure that they do not jeopardize their family time in the face of their work and career. Whenever they get time off work, they should devise plans on how to make the most of it. In the end, it is the quality of time that matters and not the quantity.

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