

Women in Higher Education Governance

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Abstract

This paper is a research study conducted on women administrators in higher education. The purpose of the study is to explore the career pathways of women administrators in Higher Education system of India. It is also an attempt to understand the barriers they encounter and the coping strategies devised by these women administrators to advance their career. Case studies on eleven women vice chancellors are conducted to understand their pathways. The researcher met personally and interviewed the women vice chancellors. The data was collected from various sources such as family, relatives, friends, colleagues etc. The data was analyzed qualitatively. A common career path emerged in all the eleven women administrators. The barriers which emerged were family related barriers, lack of support system, lack of networking and socialization, lack of role model. The strategies which were used by the women administrators were informal networking, personal qualities of being bold and determined.

Key words

Women Educational Administrators, Barriers Faced, Women Managers

India has the third largest higher education system in the world next to China and United States. It has a total of 496 universities, out of these 239 are State Universities, 130 deemed universities, 40 Central Universities, 49 Private Universities and 38 institutions of national importance (Universities Handbook, 2010). In these 496 Universities, we find many women in teaching profession. But one finds very few women at top levels such as Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and Dean, even though there are a large number of women who choose teaching as their profession. The reality is that women's participation at decision-making levels in any field is dismally low. Considering the fact that they constitute almost half the population they are very few in decision making process. The picture is the same in Educational Governance. Although women have gained access to higher education all over the world, the scenario is same, that their numbers are still far below men in the Governance of institutions of higher education. That women are lagging behind men in taking up educational opportunities possibly contributes to the fact that women are not visible in large numbers at higher positions in educational Governance. But there are many within the profession who are very capable and could wear the mantle of administrator easily. Yet these women do not seem to aspire for it.

As a matter of fact, most professionals, men or women, such as scientists and doctors, do not like Governance because it is mundane and routine. But, generalization notwithstanding, there is greater love among men for the power and influence that goes with administrative posts. The "power structure" in institutions quite often inhibits women. But still we find that there are some women who have taken up the challenging task, reached to the top and even sustained that position. They are known for their contribution in the field of educational Governance. Who are those few women who could do that? These women who have made an entry into a least traveled path can be role models for other women. If some of them can reach that height then why the others cannot reach there? What is so specific about them that they can achieve is worth investigating. A qualitative Research focusing on women who have achieved administrative positions in higher education is undertaken in order to give comprehensive understanding of the issues and obstacles that are faced by women administrators in higher education and the strategies they adopted to overcome those obstacles. The researcher has conducted indepth case studies of eleven women Vice-Chancellors all over India to gain an insight

into the life of those women who have achieved administrative positions. This will give learning experiences to other women who are aspiring for administrative positions. The researcher intended to study these women to understand their pathways to the top administrative position. How they reached the top position and what were the strategies they adopted to sustain that position.

Women in Higher Education Governance

In an attempt to find the data of Women in Higher education Governance it was found that although we have bodies such as University Grants Commission and the Association of Indian Universities who has put a variety of statistics on Higher Education in India, but there are hardly any data on the gender composition of the different academic and administrative positions in the system. This is a serious shortcoming, particularly in view of the national commitment to advance the participation of women in development (Chitins S 1992). An attempt is made here to give the statistics of women at different administrative positions in Higher education with the help of Universities Handbook (as the name represents gender and verifying from other sources) whether it is male or female.

India has a vast Higher Education system with a total of 496 universities. Out of these 496 Universities only 341 Universities are members of Association of Indian University (AIU) as per Universities Handbook, 2010. All these universities and institutions have different category of administrators at various levels such as Vice-Chancellors, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Deans, Directors, Librarians, Co-coordinators, etc. The data of women administrators at these positions is given in table 6.

Out of 290 institutions in the year 2000 there were eleven women Vice-Chancellors which is just 3.8 percent representation, the highest number is seen in Deans position which is sixty six in 290 universities but one should not forget that deans position are many in an institution whereas Vice Chancellors' post is single.

Table : 6 Women Administrators in Higher Education

Positions	Number of women administrators				
	1995	2000	2003	2006	2010
Vice Chancellors	09	11	06	10	22
Pro- Vice Chancellors	02	01	01	00	02
Registrars	06	03	03	06*	06
Deans	66	66	50	57	99
Directors	06	13	04	04	05
Total	89	94	64	67	134

* out of six Registrars, one is in-charge and one officiating

The data available on the number of women in higher education administration and in influential and decision-making positions clearly indicates that women are very few. They are severely under-represented at senior academic management positions. The above table shows the number of women administrators in Indian Universities and other higher educational institutions in the years 1995, 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2010 (Universities Handbook of A.I.U., 1995, 2000, 2003, 2010)

The number of women Vice-Chancellors has increased recently in the year 2010 to 22 women Vice-Chancellors but the number of Universities has also increased to 341 (only members of AIU included). This comes to 6.4 percent which shows increase though not a major difference but an improvement is noted. Even the number of Deans has also increased to 99.

It is also observed that as we move above the ladder the number of women at administrative position decreases. More women are seen in the Deans position but very few for the Registrar, Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. The statistics show that women are missing at senior management positions. The number of women educational administrators is insignificant and demystify the equality among sexes. This shows that management in higher education has basically become a masculine activity. Women have not occupied positions that can enable them to influence the policies and direction of their institutions, both at the departmental and at institutional levels. Thus, we can say that the leadership and management structure of higher education is still male-dominated as shown above. This is not only the picture observed in India but studies conducted on the position of women in higher education in most other countries also reveal that women still occupy junior ranks in spite of their increased participation in higher education in the recent years (Hansard Report, 1990, Lund, 1998; UNESCO, 1993; Nzomo, 1995; Kanake, 1997; Lodiaga and Mbevi, 1995). Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service survey report (Lund 1998) also revealed that there was no discernable difference between the developed countries of the Commonwealth and their counterparts in developing countries. In management, women were found to be invisible in senior management positions. Most women were found to be more likely to occupy such positions as Registrar, Librarians or Heads of personnel rather than Vice-Chancellors. This trend of decreasing women administrators as we move up the ladder can be explained by looking into the process of appointments being made at different administrative positions and even by examining the rights and duties associated with these positions.

The Chief Executive administrative positions in any University are: The Chancellor, The Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar and the Chief Academic administrative positions

are: the Faculty Dean and the Department Head.

The **Chancellor** is the head of the university (called 'visitor' in the case of Central Universities). The Governor is the Chancellor in the State Universities; The Chancellor or 'visitor' in case of Central Universities is the President of India. The Chancellor is also chairman of Senate. All statutes and ordinances of the university must receive his approval. He has the power to ask any papers or information. All appointments and promotions must receive his approval. Formally he/she appoints the Vice-Chancellor. Usually he/she follows the wishes of the State Government in this appointment, but sometimes can play a deciding role. The Chancellor presides over all the official functions of the University, especially its yearly convocations. The role of Chancellor is largely ceremonial. Chancellor has a constant but remote presence in the life of the University.

The **Vice-Chancellor** is the Chief Executive and academic officer of the University. He/she is the kingpin of the University Administration. Following the principle of centralization, all academic influence and administrative powers seems to be concentrated in him/her. But for a few exceptions, Vice-Chancellorship is a full-time paid position. Vice-Chancellor is selected by the Chancellor from the list of names submitted by the search/selection committee. The committee usually consists of three members nominated by members of the Senate, Syndicate, State Governments, High Court, or some combination of these. In a few cases, the Vice-Chancellor is elected by the Senate or Syndicate. The term of appointment of Vice-Chancellor is normally three to five years and may be renewable by another term. The Vice-Chancellor's duties are many. He/she is Ex-officio Chairman of the Senate, the Syndicate and the Academic Council, and numerous committees, including very important faculty selection committees. Vice-Chancellor presides over the Senate in the absence of the Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor is at the centre of University affairs. He/She is at the centre of the university's internal governance and external relationships. He is, without a doubt, the key player in the University administration. Decisions revolve around him/her. He represents the University to the larger community, to the national and international academic and professional organizations.

The **Pro-Vice-Chancellor** is a recent phenomenon. It leads often to political interference in the University's affairs and undermines the University's autonomy. In a University, an assistant to a Vice-Chancellor is called a Pro-Vice-Chancellor (also Rector or deputy Vice-Chancellor). These are sometimes teaching academics who take on additional responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities are in-charge of Administration, Research and Development, Academic and Education affairs. In some Universities, there

are several deputies Vice-Chancellor subordinate to the Vice-Chancellor, with Pro-Vice-Chancellor being a position at an executive level ranking below Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor is normally appointed by the Executive Council on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor. If the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor is not accepted by the Executive Council, the matter shall be referred to the Visitor who may either appoint the person recommended by the Vice-Chancellor or ask the Vice-Chancellor to recommend another person to the Executive Council. The Executive Council may, on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor, appoint a Professor to discharge the duties of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor in addition to his own duties as a Professor. The term of office of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor may be decided by the Executive Council but it shall not in any case exceed five years or until the expiration of the term of office of the Vice-Chancellor, whichever is earlier.

The **Registrar** is the custodian of the University seal, of all its buildings, properties and records. He is also the secretary of the Senate, Syndicate and other University authorities and committees. He keeps minutes of their meetings and records of their deliberations. The Registrar is not a public man. He is the bureaucrat, the man behind the scenes, the man always on hand. His cooperation is highly valued, his opposition not lightly dismissed.

Looking to the way the above administrative positions are filled, we can understand that as the power and position increases the chances of women being selected becomes low. The top level positions require more of socialization and networking and a position of Vice-Chancellor is more political in nature as the State Government has a role to play in selection. The female half of our population has often been ignored, ridiculed, thwarted, or prevented from considering administrative roles. To begin changing this precedent, we have to consider what barriers are there which prevents the women to move forward as administrators. With an understanding of these barriers, the strategies can be evolved which will help them in taking up administrative positions. According to societal trend there is a general assumption that it is difficult for women to reach up to managerial positions due to their so-called inherent inability and the traditional upbringing at home. Women have to face various constraints in their career advancement. In a male dominated society like ours, there may be several personal, social, political, and economic problems, which may hinder the access of women to the managerial positions in the profession of education.

In spite of promising demographical statistics, equal opportunities for women to secure positions in educational administration are still hampered by some historical myths and contemporary barriers. As a necessary step to achieve success, the constraints that women face must be examined to find individual and gender specific ways to progress.

Rationale For The Study

The under representation of women at senior higher education management should be a concern for everybody because women are about fifty percent of all nationalities and a significant part of any nations' work force. Being half of the population, and half of the human resources, if women have to contribute significantly towards the development, they too need to be in higher administrative positions to influence policy and decision-making. To make any decision balanced and complete, there is a need to consider women's viewpoint in every activity of decision-making.

We must ensure that policies are drawn up through 'women's eyes' also, which is not the case now.

The women who are already in management and leadership positions should be enriched, encouraged and motivated. Any country serious about fully utilizing all its human resources' potential cannot leave the task to the very small number of women in leadership positions. Without equal access and opportunities for women with higher education, a major section of the work force is underutilized and the achievements of the next generation underdeveloped. Women have particular skills, knowledge and attitudes that they can bring into higher education management. Research studies have tried to identify the barriers but the researcher in this study will make an effort to examine these barriers in much detail and an effort will be made to understand how these barriers originated and overcome.

Higher education management is where high-level technical, professional and managerial personnel are trained to work in various sectors of our economy. Higher education is the one, which provides the teachers, scholars, managers and administrators for the whole education system. It generates knowledge and innovation through scientific research that is needed for development. If we have more women in administrative positions then it is most likely that they will act as role models for other young girls who will aspire for higher education. Again women will be able to play an important role in national development. Today the number of women has increased in the field of higher education as professionals. However, it needs to be noted that number of women administrators over years is far from satisfactory. Though the proportion of women teachers at university and college level is increasing, number of women administrators at this level is still very low. It is interesting to note that when one looks at the entire system of education, as one moves up on the ladders, number of women administrators goes down. Therefore, number of women administrators is more at primary school level and it gets reduced at secondary and higher education level. Even when one makes a further analysis of the situation at higher education level, number of women occupying positions as Heads & Deans is more than that as University Registrars, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors. Very few women are found at the top positions in Indian higher education like that of Pro-Vice Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Registrars, Directors. This is a matter of great concern and needs a reflection as to how these few women could make up to reach to these positions and what process they followed and how they could maintain and sustain that position.

In this context the researcher is undertaking an intensive, in-depth study of female administrators in the position of Vice-Chancellor. The researcher seeks to get an insight into the journey of these Women Administrators from childhood till being a Vice-Chancellor. This will help to understand how they reached to top most position and what were the strategies adopted by them to sustain at that position. This will give an insight to other aspiring women administrators and help them to understand the problems in the perspective of their own problems.

The higher education management continues to be the most gender-stratified executive position in the country with men more likely to advance from teaching to top administrative role than are women. Therefore it should be clearly evident that research based understanding of this inequitable situation from the perspectives of the relatively few women who inhabit the role is needed. There is need to focus on developing a better understanding of women administrator's experiences, the challenges they have faced and

the factors that have led to their promotion or success. The main purpose of research here is to identify women administrator's experiences since childhood, their barriers, bottlenecks and general inhibitors or equal outcomes of women administrators in college or university administration and to document the experiences of these women who have served as administrators at college or university level by doing their case studies. The qualitative details of the lives of these women administrators may suggest an alternative way of viewing issues in educational administration. Their case study will give texture and color to the quantitative data most often relied in other studies. Such studies in the field of women educational administration will also help in the theory building in the field of educational administration as till now the theories were built on the assumptions that the experiences of male and female are the same and thus research on males is appropriate for generalizing the female experiences.

Objectives of The Study

The objectives formulated for the study are as follows:

1. To understand the process followed by women administrators in Indian higher education to reach the top administrative position.
2. To study the procedure adopted by the women administrators in Indian higher education to sustain their position.

Identification of Sample Cases

The target population for this study was women administrators in higher education serving in the position of Vice-Chancellor of Universities in India. The sample consisted of eleven Women administrators who have served Vice-Chancellors. Obtaining the potential participants list was very difficult for the researcher as there is no database available on women administrators in higher education. The researcher took the help of Universities Handbooks, where the details of all universities along with its staff members is available and also resorted to google search. Apart from this, the researcher contacted the participants and asked them to recommend some name of the other women Vice-Chancellors which is commonly referred as Snowball Sampling. The researcher was not bound by time period, anybody who has attained the administrative position was the sample for the study.

Data Needed For The Study

The data which was needed for this study was divided into several compartments by the researcher for making the data collection procedure simple. The data which was needed was listed under several phases of life such as childhood days, school days, higher education days, professional life, married life and being a Vice-Chancellor. A comprehensive life story of the women administrator from childhood till date was needed. The researcher wanted the details such as the family background of cases, parents education, their socio economic background, the childhood days of the participants, the school days, in which school the case studied, the difficulties faced at these stages, her aspirations in life, the college life of the case, the type of college in which case studied, difficulties faced, her aspirations in life, the professional life of the cases, how they progressed in their career, the difficulties faced by them in professional life, the strategies they adopted to overcome them, their aspirations in profession, the marriage life of the case, the support form in-laws, husband and children, difficulties faced at home front and work place and strategies adopted to balance both.

Sources of Data

For the present study, multiple sources of data collection was considered for data collection. Different personnel were involved to congregate data. They are the case herself, parents, relatives, neighbors, friends\peer, teachers, colleagues, students, non-academic staff, peon, and many more who all the researcher could find related to them and had an impact on their life. Apart from this the data was also collected from documents, newspapers and the observation of the researcher during the field visit and interaction with different sources and cases.

Tools Used For Data Collection

The major tool which was used for data collection was unstructured interview. Apart from this the researcher also used observation, document analysis and focused group interview.

Process of Data Collection

Once a participant agreed to the study, the researcher contacted them to set up the initial interview. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used unstructured interviews. Minimum two interviews were done with the case and if needed more interviews were also fixed up.

The data was also collected from other sources. While interviewing with the case the researcher came to know about the people who affected their life the most and who knew them well. This helped the researcher to select the other sources of data. Even the participants gave some references whom the researcher can meet. The researcher also visited different places for the data collection. The place where the case lived, to meet the other sources like for family members the researcher visited their residence where they were located, Institution where the case worked and also the institution where the case is or was Vice-Chancellor. The researcher interviewed the people whom the participants had referred and whom the researcher thought could be important source of information. The researcher prepared the field notes of what she saw, heard, experienced and thought on the field. It contained descriptions. These field notes were the data that was further analyzed to get the understanding of the case. These transcripts were written while conversing with the participants and all notes were taken down. As soon as the researcher left the field the remaining information was recalled, reflected and noted down.

Data Analysis

For data analysis the raw data gathered in large amount were read critically for a number of times. The data was closely examined in order to find constructs, themes, and patterns that can be used to describe and explain case. The major themes which emerged are career Pathways, Barriers and Strategies. Each Case as a Unit was analyzed under these major themes. Later two major steps were followed for content analysis which are Data reduction and data display.

Data Reduction

To gain a holistic view of the width and depth of raw data, the researcher first read through all pages of transcriptions. To reduce the amount of raw data, the researcher then read the transcripts for a second time with the objectives of the study in mind. The researcher during the second review, identified the emerging themes and categorized the collected data under these themes, while irrelevant data were put aside temporarily.

Data Display

The next logical step is data display. Here display means an organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing. The details regarding the different phases of life of each case is with the researcher. The researcher prepared a case history of each case separately by triangulating the information collected from each source. This case history was presented under different themes such as family background, their school life, higher education life, married life and professional life.

Derivation

After making presentation of each case come commonalities can be derived. The researcher has tried to derive some commonalities among the cases based on the objectives of the study. The researcher analyzed the cases on the areas such as career paths being followed, barriers encountered by cases at different phases, how the cases overcome the barriers.

Findings and Discussions

To identify the themes the researcher analyzed the cases and looked at some of the themes that cut across the participants. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the researcher identified the following three themes: Career path, barriers and strategies.

Career Path of Women Administrators

The career path of the women administrators can be understood in terms of their family background, qualifications, entry into profession and how they progressed further. In the formative years the family background and its contribution is very important. Family background has lots of influence on a persons' life. It helps in guiding our beliefs of what is good and desirable and what is harmful and unacceptable. Whether one's family lived in an urban or a rural area influences both opportunities for social mobility and social attitudes. This may be particularly important in the case of India where there is a tremendous disparity in the availability of educational, cultural and professional resources between urban and rural areas. Most of the women administrators' described their father's and mother's origin as rural. Most of them later migrated to urban areas so that they can provide better education to their children. Most of the women administrators' belonged to the families where parental income was too less and had faced much economic constraints during their childhood. In few cases, they even had the problem of having two meals a day and the parents borrowed money from neighbors. They have even sold their belonging for making their daughters' study. One thing which was common among almost all the participants was their inclination towards education. They all wanted to study in spite of opposition from the extended family for girl's education. In this study out of eleven women administrators, two of the women administrators belonged to illustrious and aristocratic family. Another two belonged to a very poor background and belonged to backward community. They did not even had two meals a day properly. However, most of them were from middle class and upper middle class background.

Most of the women participants in this study belonged to the family where the parents were not highly educated. Very few participants' father had completed Graduation or Post Graduation. In almost all the cases the mother was illiterate or studied till primary classes except in one case. In spite of being less educated it was observed that except in one case all the families had a very liberal thinking and believed in giving higher education to daughters. That was

the period when the girls' education was not promoted but these parents fought against odds to provide better education to their daughters. The higher education gained by these women with the efforts of their parents and a strong zeal to study later created a strong base for their career.

Vice-Chancellors are expected to be highly educated, with all of them having earned advanced Post-Graduate degrees. Majority of the women participants attended government schools for their school education. Very few of them went to elite schools for their elementary or secondary education. All the women participants were having Post- Graduate degrees and even the Doctorates except one. Most of the participants had continuity in their studies. But some of them had a break. One participant was not allowed to go for further studies by her parents and hence after a long break of around ten years she later took up her higher education with the support of her husband. In two cases, they had break because of financial constraint but later with a gap of just one or two years resumed their studies. Most of them completed their Masters' degree before marriage. Many of them did their Doctorates after marriage. The women administrators studied were not very brilliant academically but they were inclined to get higher education without any aspirations to be a career woman. None of the women administrators knew what they want to do in future. Only one of the women administrator admitted that she wanted to be like her College 'Principal'. The entry into teaching profession was also not planned. As they were into the system of higher education for doing their Doctorates, they got an opportunity to work in their institutions where they studied and they took up these opportunities. In one case, it was her father who made her enter the teaching profession though she was not interested. On analyzing the career path of these women administrators after entering into the profession, the common path which has emerged is that (except two) all started their career as teaching faculty and later progressed gradually into the profession and became Reader and Professor and also got opportunity to be Head and Dean. Before becoming Vice-Chancellor, all the women administrators had administrative experience of being Heads and Deans. The two women administrators who started their career as 'Project fellow' also later came to the same path as others, they also after being project fellow entered into teaching as Lecturer and moved up similarly. Before entering into the profession, we do not find similarity in the career path of these eleven women participants, as many participants had continuity in studies, many had break due to economic constraints, the streams of Graduation and Post Graduation differed, some completed full education before marriage and some after marriage. After entering into the profession, we do find commonality among their progression. The path which emerged was entering into teaching profession as a faculty and then progressing slowly by proving their credentials. The women administrators after entering into their profession took up all the challenges which came up their way and proved their capabilities. Their success in the task assigned helped them in getting many more challenging tasks which helped them to be known in the University system. Apart from this, they also continued contributing a lot in their academic field. Most of the women had some political linkages which may have helped them to attain the top most administrative position in the University. The other participants who did not had political linkages got an opportunity to be Vice-Chancellor because of their academic contribution in their field, hard work and sincerity. Being Vice-Chancellor was not planned by any of the women administrator.

Majority of the women Vice-Chancellors had never aspired to be at this post. They all were asked to submit their biodata's by some of their colleagues or well wishers and they were selected.

A path which emerges to be at top most administrative position is that one should acquire all the necessary academic qualifications and then enter into the Higher Education system as a Teaching Faculty and prove oneself worthy of the position by taking up all the challenging task which comes in the way. One should keep contributing in the academic field through research and publications. Many women belonged to upper-middle class family, some affluent background and some poor family but still all could achieve the top most position which shows that economic and social background has no impact on administrative positions. The support of parents does influence the achievement of women as all the women administrators had supportive parents.

Barriers Faced by Women Administrators

A woman has to face lots of barriers by just being a "woman". In our traditional society the woman is expected to be at home and take care of the family. Family is the prime responsibility of woman. If at all a woman wants to go out and work then also the prime responsibility of looking after family is with her only and she does not get any relaxation. The most common barrier one faces is balancing family and work. Apart from this there are various other barriers which a woman has to face such as gender stereotypes, lack of mentoring, lack of support system, lack of networking. The common barriers found in most of the cases are discussed as follows:

- **Family Responsibilities**

In this study, the most common barrier faced by all the eleven cases is balancing work and family. All women administrators expressed dissatisfaction in personal life, as they were not able to devote sufficient time for family and social role fulfillment. They shared that many a times they used to have a guilt feeling of not being able to devote more time to their children. This is mainly because of their major involvement in child bearing and child rearing and other domestic activities. The ultimate responsibility for organizing and planning childcare and home tasks invariably seems to rest with women. One of the women has reported that her career progression has come at the cost of her personal life. Many of her colleagues also did not appreciate her of giving more importance to work than family. She also feels guilty now of neglecting her child. Women tend to show a major concern for family matters. Particularly among mothers of young children, time constraints associated with children's responsibilities appeared to be key factor leading to work-family conflict. All women interviewees except one (as she was unmarried) expressed concern about striking a balance between family and professional life as a serious constraint especially after marriage. The dilemma which many of the women faced was what comes first, family or career? Most of them gave family the first priority. Many did not initially take up challenging task when their children were small as it needed more time to be devoted to work place. One of the participants took her career after around ten years of her marriage. She gave importance to her family responsibilities as her in-laws did not like her studying further and work outside. She kept quiet and took care of her children and waited patiently for the right time to come. Another participant progressed fast in her career as she did not have child in the initial years of her career. When her

son was born, at that time she had already become Professor and a Dean and then with these responsibilities she could not devote time to her child because of which the child has developed some psychological problem and this she regrets till date as she had given priority to her career than family. Some of the participants felt 'guilty' leaving their kids to go to work. It is evident that one of the major factors affecting women's career experiences is family responsibilities. The women administrators also identified the expectations of family responsibilities as a strong influence in their professional lives. Marital status had an impact on their ability to carry out the responsibilities inherent to their positions. Concerns about balancing family and career were frequently mentioned by the women and is described as one of the key challenges. These women indicated that there was always a struggle to maintain a balance emotionally and physically between professional and personal life. Balancing the family and work responsibility was the barrier which was faced by the women administrators more during the initial phase of their career. That was the period when they had entered into the profession and were newly married and planning for family.

Balancing family and work has emerged as a common barrier in almost all the cases. Married women have more difficulty in balancing this as children are the prime responsibility of women. The root of this barrier lies in our traditional value system where the women is expected to look after the family and children.

- **Lack of Support System**

The barriers related to family responsibilities were majorly faced by the women administrators due to lack of support systems. Most of the family related barriers are faced because of the lack of support system. To cope up with all these multiple tasks, the support system is needed. The women administrators lacked support system. Many of the participants stayed in a nuclear family so there was no support from the family members. Both the parents were working, so taking care of children becomes a challenging task. Due to lack of support system, in many cases the women did not take up the challenging positions in the initial years of their career due to response. This barrier is felt mostly when they had small children and balancing the work, family and children becomes difficult. After the children were grown up the intensity of this barrier was reduced. It was very difficult to leave the small child in the care of just the maid. Almost all the eleven women administrators in this study stayed in the nuclear family and had no support from the elderly people in the family. Most of the women administrators were doing their Doctoral studies alongwith work. They had multiple tasks to do, studying, teaching and looking after children. That was the period which was described as "The Most Difficult Phase" by almost all the women participants. All the tasks were demanding and none could be neglected.

Some of the participants were lucky enough to get the support from their family members. In most of the cases the mother of the participant helped them a lot. In one case her brother left his studies and stayed with the case to support her in taking care of children while another participants sister came to help her in sharing her responsibilities towards her son. One of the participants was fortunate enough to be always surrounded by elderly people who used to take care of her children. Husbands of almost all women administrators always supported them and encouraged them to take up the career.

Lack of support system is a barrier faced by many women

administrators as they do not believe in outsourcing the work and would like to do most of the tasks on their own. This barrier was faced as many of the women administrators stayed in nuclear family.

• **Gender Stereotypes**

Women are socialized to be the nurturers, and the emotional caretakers. From childhood, women are socialized in believing that domestic tasks are women's work. Even in this study almost all women were brought up with this orientation. Though the parents supported their education and even encouraged them to work but they were taught from the beginning that family is their prime responsibility. The sex role stereotype is being experienced by the women administrators from their childhood days. In many cases they faced objections from the society for education, as girls' education was not promoted. In case of one of the participant even the parents also did not encourage her for education and marriage was given first priority. Some of the women administrators reported that at home also they could feel gender discrimination. The mothers expected the girl child to help in domestic work and the male child to study. Even in selection of stream in school and College they faced the stereotypical attitude of people. The girls were expected to opt for Arts or Humanities stream. The Science stream was thought to be meant for male candidates.

One women administrator was not allowed to continue education due to the orthodox mindset of her father and was married at an early age. In most of the cases the parents of women administrators supported their education and fought against such gender discriminations. The gender stereotype was the common barrier faced by almost all of them throughout their journey. During College days the society and some of the relatives objected to their going for higher education as higher education according to them was only meant for male child. Even during the subject selection, the stereotypical attitude was reflected. As reported by Kusumakumari (Case: 8) *"I wanted to continue my Post graduation course with Science stream as I had done BSc. Even I applied for Veterinary, Agricultural science and many other fields and even got admission but I was not allowed to join M.Sc as my family was of the opinion that being a girl I should opt for Arts stream as I was not expected to take up a career"*

These women administrators were suggested to take up Arts field and the selection for science stream was not appreciated. In some cases even the parents wanted their daughters to select Arts field. After entering the profession also many women administrators reported that they experienced gender discrimination at different stages of their life. One of the women administrator Sudharao (Case: 4), who applied for a senior post was appointed for the junior post just because she was woman and the selection committee thought that she would not be able to take care of the job responsibilities. She was asked *"this job demands much of traveling and tour, will you be able to manage that?"*, *"How will you manage family and children?"*

One woman administrator also shared that she was not easily accepted at administrative post by her male colleagues because their male ego was hurt. They had till then not worked under any female boss. Stereotyping and gender discrimination has thus emerged as one of the barriers faced by women administrators.

Gender stereotype lies in our socialization process. The society had different ways of looking at male child and girl child. The grooming of girl child is done in a way wherein the marriage and household responsibilities are focused rather than education and

career. The whole mind set of the society needs to be changed that even woman has the potential to do all the tasks which a man can do.

• **Lack of Career Planning**

Planning makes the task easy. If one knows where one has to go then selecting the path becomes easy. Similarly if the career is planned then it systematizes the path and one knows what qualifications to gain and which skills to learn. In this study almost all women administrators shared that they had not planned their career. Even they had not planned their education. They had never thought what they want to be in life. Career aspirations were absent. The reason for lack of career planning lies in our socialization pattern, the way the girls are being brought up. Professional women's socialization to work generally begins with parental expectations that although work and careers are important and highly regarded, they will always be secondary to marriage, husband and children. For women the career of their spouse always remains priority and they will sacrifice their own career for the career of their spouse. After marriage the women is expected to shift with the husband and they might have to leave the job. Because of these reasons the women do not plan their career as planning will not work so its better not to plan, than to plan and not be able to achieve.

Only one of the women participant shared that she wanted to become a 'Principal', as one of her Principal was her role model. She has not aspired to rise above Principalship. The position of Vice-Chancellor came to her by chance. Two of the women administrator took the career seriously and started planning at the later stage after achieving the initial administrative positions. Almost all women administrators lacked clarity regarding their career. They had never planned for their career. They took opportunities as it came to their life. Even while taking education they lacked clarity as to what course they will take up. In most of the cases even the choice of stream for their Graduation and Post Graduation was influenced by their parents or societal pressures. This happened because they themselves were not clear what they want to do in life. Even after entering the profession, they were not clear, regarding their career progression. It emerged from the study that none of them had clear career goals. One women administrator shared that she wanted to take up career but what career, she wasn't sure of it. Even here in this study it has emerged that these women administrators did not plan their career. It is interesting to note that all the eleven women administrators did not start off their career in higher education with an intention of becoming a Vice-Chancellor. This lack of career planning is influenced by lack of socialization, barriers and the lack of grooming. A woman may be unlikely to plan for her career and without a "push" from a mentor, may never get set on a clear career path in administration. Most of the women administrators in this study were asked by others to apply for Vice-Chancellor. They themselves never thought of becoming a Vice-Chancellor. Even after being suggested by some of their friends, colleagues, they were not sure whether they had the capability to be Vice-Chancellor. They lacked in confidence. One of the woman administrators even shared that after being Vice-Chancellor she used to cry a lot as she could not handle the pressure but later emerged as a strong person with time.

• **Lack of Role Models Or Mentors**

Formal mentoring is a new feature which has come up but informal mentoring was always there. There is a body of research that suggests that mentoring does contribute to women's career success.

The Women administrators in this study saw very few women in high level administrative positions in higher education. In case of one of the participant, she was the first women Professor in her entire state. Another women administrator was the first women Dean in her University. Only the women who belonged to women University has seen some women working at top administrative positions, even in her case the former Vice-Chancellor never played any role to encourage other women to aspire for administrative positions and put efforts towards it. Most of the women administrators were the first women Vice-Chancellors of their respective Universities. These women administrators had no one to follow. Females see few women in high level administrative positions in higher education, especially those who are married and mothers, and struggle with how to travel on the career journey without examples to follow. One of the women administrator had reported that she found her role model in one of her Principal of College and she wanted to be like her and become 'Principal' in future. The key role model which was reported by most of the women administrators were their mother and this can confuse the matters more as the mother stays at home and the daughter is thinking of a career. Very few women administrators had reported that they had mentors or role models in their life. It emerges from this study that the parents of participants acted as a mentor in the initial phase of their life. The Guides of many of the participant has also played the role of the mentor. They guided them at various stages of their career. Some had said that they had some teacher who had a strong influence over them. But none of them had reported that they had somebody to guide them to achieve the administrative positions. As discussed above, many of the women's career paths are characterized by the "first" – first female Vice-Chancellor, first female dean, first female professor. Being the first women at the administrative positions, they lacked role model. These women administrators had no female role model to emulate. It is observed in case of these eleven women administrators that many of the participants had found the mentor in their guides but these guides were male. The women administrators lacked female mentor. Mentors were most seen during childhood days, when their mother played the role of a mentor. In school days and higher education days some of their teachers became their role model and mentor and in the initial phase of their career their guides played the role of mentor. This was informal mentoring which took place at different phases of their career. Each of the participants valued their informal mentoring. One participant found her mentor in his guide and a senior teacher who helped her to overcome the professional stress and on their guidance and encouragement she went abroad for her post doctoral work. In another case also when the participant was planning to resign from the job, her guide played an important role of mentor to boost self-confidence in her. At the later stage of career, the women administrators do not find any mentor or role model who can guide them in the administrative positions and they find themselves alone. Formal mentoring process is missing in all the participants.

Role models or mentors help an individual in guiding them. These women administrators lacked role model but now they should act as role model for other aspiring women administrators. These women administrators should arrange formal programmes on mentoring.

• **Lack of Socialisation And Networking**

Lack of networking was one of the barriers which emerge in this study. Women had less fully developed informal networks which

could affect their advancement to high levels of management positions. There is a need to penetrate male networks to a greater extent to become sufficiently visible to win institutional promotions. Women with family responsibilities are at disadvantage in network participation, as they have less time due to home and family commitments. Most of the women administrators had reported that they did not give much importance to socialization outside family. For them family was very important and whatever free time they used to get from work they used to prefer to spend it with the family rather than socialize outside. It was reported by some of the cases that they even faced problem in their promotion from Lecturer to Reader and from Reader to Professor because they lacked socialization. They did not socialize with their Heads of the Department and this was the reason quoted by them for not being promoted.

The women administrators though knew the importance of socialization and networking did not indulge into it as according to them their family was their priority and career was secondary. Whatever little free time they used to get, they preferred spending it with their children and family rather than socializing and networking outside. Many of the women administrators even reported that they were not comfortable in the late night parties and dinner diplomacy. Networking is not perceived to be a good quality by the participants of this study and it was thought to be against Indian culture for women to socialize outside family. Lack of networking is also reported by Wilbanks (2005) in his study as barrier faced by women administrators. Some women administrators shared that they feel uncomfortable with men group and they don't know what to talk to them.

Women administrators lacked networking and socialization because they themselves did not believed in the concept of socialization and wanted to spend the free time with their family instead of socializing outside. Women always kept family as first priority.

Strategies Adopted by Women Administrators

Strategies here refer to kind of activities the women had undertaken, and continue to undertake to advance their development. In spite of the barriers many women administrators have come to the top most administrative positions and even sustained the position. These women could do that because they could overcome the barriers which they encountered. The strategies could be evolved to face the barriers. It was the opinion of many of the participants that "no one is going to come and help you (women administrators) but you yourself has to fight your battle and design your strategies to overcome the barriers". The main strategies which emerged across all the cases are support system, personal qualities, political connections and networking.

• **Support System**

The major barrier which the women have to face is family responsibilities. Family responsibility has been a barrier because of lack of support. To overcome this barrier, the women administrators should mobilize the support system. The participants in this study could overcome the barrier of family responsibilities by mobilizing support system. The mothers of most of the women administrators supported them during the initial phase of their career by taking care of children. Women administrators even hired the services of maid to help them overcome this barrier. One of the Vice-Chancellors reported that she used to take care of the maid a lot and even did not mind paying them more as maid is very much

important for working women to balance both family and work. Most of the women administrators could overcome the barriers by creating support systems for themselves. In many cases the parents were support system before marriage wherein the parents did not care about the societal pressures and encouraged the girl child to pursue higher education in spite of so many economic constraints. In most of the cases parents and husbands enhanced career/family balance by helping with home and children. In almost all the cases, it was the mother of the participants who came to support them, than the mother-in-law. By many of the women administrators the children were also cited as a source of support by being proud of their mothers' accomplishments. Almost all took help of the domestic servant to balance a strike between family and the profession. An emphasis was seen on outsourcing domestic responsibilities and rejecting the mythical notions of "superwoman" that "does it all". The emphasis on outsourcing leads to "new motherhood" where career and mothering roles are maintained but domestic responsibility is subcontracted. Almost in all the cases the husbands were very cooperative and they encouraged their wife to take up challenging tasks and even shared the household responsibilities. The women in this study drew on personal support from parents, children and spouse. The parents played an important role in encouraging their daughters' academic achievements and professional pursuits. Participants described how they were raised to believe they could achieve anything and rarely had their choices questioned. Finally, husbands were cited as a significant support source in both personal and professional realms, providing professional and emotional support.

Though family was the major barrier being faced by the women administrators, but the same family also emerged as a strong support system. It emerges from the cases of these women administrators that the support from their parents in the initial stage and later after marriage the support of their husband proved to be very encouraging. Almost all the women administrators shared that they had supportive husband. Husbands in particular have played an important role as influencer for the women administrators

For any working women, support system is must to take care of dual responsibilities of family and work. The women administrators should be capable of mobilizing support system. They should not always take all the responsibilities themselves but should outsource some of the task. The parents are the major support system for any women administrator.

• **Personal Qualities**

Personal qualities play an important role to sustain the administrative positions. Most women referred to being able to overcome many of the above mentioned barriers through a combination of personal characteristics such as determination, hard work, perseverance, strong personality and devotion to work. There are certain traits which are needed for an administrator which will help them to fulfill their responsibilities effectively and efficiently. The women administrators in this study could reach to the top most positions because of their above mentioned personal traits. The women administrators believed in doing their job to the best of their ability. Almost all the women administrators had the quality of taking up the opportunity whatever came their way. They never said "NO" to any work as they believed that it's their responsibility to contribute to their institutions. This habit of not saying "no" to any work has worked as a strategy though it was not consciously used. These small opportunities which came to their way and successful completion of these tasks gave them recognition in

the higher education system and were known in the outer circle. Being a Vice-Chancellor is a very challenging task for a woman. Everybody is looking at the woman as they have not expected a woman to be at such a post and they are continuously under screening. Woman Vice-Chancellors are not easily acceptable to the traditional male dominated society and because of this people are always there to create trouble and see that they commit one mistake and they are out. Many of the women Vice-Chancellors in this study faced problems of agitations, dharnas, strikes etc. The women administrators faced such situations boldly. One of the participant was appointed as Vice-Chancellor of a University which is very political in nature which has a history that very few Vice-Chancellors could complete their tenure and most of them were 'Bhagoda'. In such a University the woman Vice-Chancellor could complete her tenure. The women administrators could sustain to the administrative positions because of their personal qualities of being firm, abiding by principles and rules and having administrative skills.

The women have to fight their own battle. Barriers are bound to be there and nobody can help them unless they help themselves. The personal qualities of women administrator will help them in achieving the administrative position as well as in sustaining the same. The women administrators should be bold to face all the challenges, they should be determined and also be well aware of rules and regulations.

• **Networking And Socialisation**

As seen above lack of networking has been a barrier to the women. Networking can help in increasing their visibility in the public. Two of the women administrators in this study had consciously utilized networking as a strategy to their benefit. One out of these two, one was single and had no family responsibilities so it was not difficult for her to network and spend time for socialization. She even did not hesitate in entering the group of male. She frequently used to invite people at her residence for lunch, dinners or breakfast and used to create network. This kind of socialization according to her has helped her a lot in getting funds to Universities and even in getting work done and reaching to the administrative positions. She could devote more time for socialization but still had some limitations of being women but was in a far better position compared to others in terms of socialization. The another participant shared that she was very well aware that if she want to move ahead in career she has to be known in public and she deliberately made attempts to be visible in public forums and attending various meetings and being a part of different associations. She even used to address the old women forums so that she could be known to people by being socially active. The other women administrators did not consciously worked for socialization and networking but due to their being part of various committees and their contribution to their own field, they were known to people and this little bit of informal networking also has helped them in getting challenging responsibilities which later became one of the step in the ladder to reach to the position of Vice-Chancellor. This exposure of working in different committees had later helped them in their career. If these women had consciously worked towards socialization and networking then they might have achieved the administrative positions earlier and with little difficulty. To be recommended for the highest post such as Vice-Chancellor one should be known and visible. To be known and visible one should have a strong social network. Women administrators should expand their social networks and keep attending various seminars and conferences

to make themselves visible.

• Political Support

Top positions in Universities are political in nature. One has to be politically well connected if one has to reach to these top most positions in higher education system. Men because of their networking and socialization have an entry into the political group also. This helps them to get an entry into the influential positions also. It is observed that in the Central Universities till now we did not have any women Vice-Chancellor being appointed. Recently in the upcoming new Central Universities two of the women have been appointed as Vice-Chancellor. The reason here can also be because the University are to be established and women are hard working so they must be thought to be the right person to do all the ground work and once the University is established may be the position will be given to male. In this study also it is observed that one woman was not appointed for the post of Vice-Chancellor since many years but when the University was facing some serious problems and no male candidate was ready to take up the position, this female women administrator was thought of. The same woman was also given a charge of another University during crisis period in the other University and once the problems were settled, she was removed and a male was appointed.

In this study though all the women administrators reported that they had not used the political connections for becoming Vice-Chancellor, it is emerged by interacting with the other sources and analyzing their background that some of them did had political connections which helped them to achieve the top administrative positions. Almost all women administrators agreed that Vice-Chancellor's positions are political. Two of the women administrators had politically related relatives. One had her husband another had her brother-in-law and father politically well connected. A third one had her husband very closely associated with the Chief Minister of the state which may have helped her in achieving the top most position as she got appointed as Vice-Chancellor during his regime and as soon as Government was changed she had to resign. One of the women administrators had a very strong influential background which helped her achieve that top most position in University, her family had strong connections with Congress Government as her father was close to Pandit Nehru. She also got appointed as Vice-Chancellor when Congress Government was in power both in Centre and State. One of the participants had an IAS brother, which might have helped her to achieve the position of Vice-Chancellor. One of the participants has emerged to be closely associated with one of the political group ABVP and she was appointed as Vice-Chancellor when this group was in power in that particular state. These incidences shows that political connections has helped many of the women administrators in achieving the position of Vice-Chancellorship.

Highest administrative position is political in nature. Women administrators should be known to political circle through their networking and contribution in their field.

Conclusion

The women administrator's studied were not academically very brilliant. They all got the basic qualifications to enter the teaching profession. These women administrators belonged to different economic backgrounds, some were having illustrious family and some very poor. Three of the women administrators belonged to backward community and many from the upper caste. It seems that Social and Economic background has no influence on the

women to get up to the position of Vice-Chancellor. After entering into the teaching profession, they did their best in their field. Then they slowly and gradually moved up the ladder by proving their capabilities and competence. Most of the barriers faced by the women administrators were socio-cultural in nature. The parents of all the women administrators have emerged as a strong support system, especially the mothers of all the administrators. All the women administrators stayed in a nuclear family which increased the barrier of balancing family and work. Informal networking due to being a member in some association or committees has helped women to be known to people and this led to the recommendation of their names during selection of Vice-Chancellors. Most of the barriers are faced by women because of their marital status. Married women have more barriers compared to the unmarried women. The one case in this study who was unmarried could devote more time for professional work as well as for networking and socialization by inviting people for dinners and lunch and even herself attended parties in evening. The family responsibility is the major barrier faced by all the women administrators. The family responsibilities do not remain the same throughout the career. This is more acute in the initial phase of the career when the children are too small and needs more attention. After children grow up they become part of the support system.

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