

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study identified the challenges of women administrators in higher educational institutions. It used a survey study research design, data were collected from 42 women administrators through challenges of women administrators Scale. Findings revealed that the women administrators face challenges in their Personal, Professional and Social dimensions, which played a crucial role in administrative process. There is no significant difference between women administrators working in Universities and Colleges in their Professional dimension of challenges. The women administrators working in universities have more challenges than the women administrators working in colleges. The women administrators working in Government, Government-aided and Self – financing colleges differ significantly in their Professional dimension of challenges. The women administrators who are in the age between 25 and 35 years, between 36 and 45 years and above 45 years associate significantly in their personal dimension of challenges. Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religious women administrators do not differ significantly in their Professional dimension of challenges and in overall challenges. Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religious women administrators differ significantly in their Personal and social dimensions of challenges. The women administrators whose monthly income is less than ₹50,000, between ₹50,000 – ₹1,00,000, between more than ₹1,00,000 – ₹2,00,000 and more than ₹2,00,000 associate significantly in their professional dimensions of challenges.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, Women administrators, Higher educational institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The global academic landscape has witnessed a gradual increase in female participation across all levels. However, when it comes to leadership roles in higher educational institutions (HEIs), women continue to face systemic barriers and underrepresentation. In India and globally, the challenges for women administrators are compounded by cultural, institutional, and personal constraints. This paper examines the current state of women administrators in HEIs, highlighting recurring and emerging challenges based on recent scholarly studies. The role of women administrators in higher educational institutions (HEIs) has become increasingly important in the 21st century, especially in the context of global movements toward gender equality, inclusive leadership, and sustainable educational development. Women continue to face various challenges in occupying and sustaining leadership roles in academia.

Significance of the study

This study on the challenges of women administrators in higher educational institutions is significant in today's scenario. Higher educational institutions are occupied with male as well as female at leadership levels. Women represent a growing proportion of students and faculty members, they remain underrepresented in administrative roles such as principals, deans, registrars, and vice chancellors. This study highlights Personal, Professional and Social challenges that hinder women's advancement into decision-making positions. By identifying these obstacles, the study contributes to the broader agenda of women administrator's challenges in academic leadership. This research sheds light on Personal, Professional and Social challenges. These challenges are not only barriers to individual growth but also reflect systemic issues within educational institutions that need to be addressed for more inclusive and effective administration of HEI.

By understanding and mitigating the challenges faced by women administrators, institutions can leverage the full potential of their human capital, fostering innovation and improved educational outcomes. It can guide educational policymakers to design frameworks that support women administrators through gender-sensitive policies, leadership training programs, and equitable recruitment and promotion processes. This will create a more supportive and

inclusive work environment in HEIs. Understanding the lived experiences and challenges of women in administrative roles can help develop targeted leadership development programs. These programs can empower aspiring women leaders by building their confidence, resilience, and leadership skills, ultimately contributing to their professional success and retention in leadership roles. The study serves as a foundation for future research on gender and leadership in higher education. It opens the door for comparative studies across regions, disciplines, and cultural contexts, and encourages dialogue on how institutions can evolve to become more inclusive and equitable workplaces.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Rani, M., & Thomas, S. (2024) argued that many women in leadership roles are token appointments without real decision-making power. Despite policy-level initiatives, women often face a “glass ceiling” and are underrepresented in significant leadership positions.

Sultana, A., & Ali, M. (2023) found that implicit biases significantly hindered women's progression to top-level administrative roles in South Asian universities. Women are often viewed as less competent leaders due to traditional beliefs associating leadership with masculine traits.

Bhatnagar, A., & Sharma, R. (2022) highlighted that women leaders in Indian HEIs often compromise personal time, leading to stress and burnout. Balancing familial responsibilities and demanding leadership roles remains a significant barrier for women.

Objectives

1. To find out the level of challenges of women administrators in the higher educational institutions.
2. To find out whether there will be any significant difference in challenges as perceived by the women administrators with respect to their i) Type of higher educational institutions ii) Type of the college.
3. To find out whether there will be any significant association in challenges as perceived by the women administrators and their i) Age ii) Religion iii) Monthly Income.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the above objectives:

1. There will be no significant difference in challenges as perceived by the women administrators with respect to their i) Type of higher educational institutions ii) Type of the college.
2. There will be no significant association in challenges as perceived by the women administrators and their i) Age ii) Religion iii) Monthly Income.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

The investigator has used survey method to study the challenges of women administrators in colleges and universities located in Chennai district.

Population & Sample of the study

The population for the present study comprises of all the Women Administrators in higher educational institutions in Chennai of Tamil Nadu state. The investigator has used Simple Random Sampling technique for selecting the sample from the population. The sample consists of 42 Women Administrators of Universities and colleges.

Analysis and Interpretation of data

Level of the Challenges of Women Administrators working in H.E.I.

Table 1.1 Level of the Challenges of women administrators working in H.E.I.

Dimensions	Low		Average		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Personal	6	14.3%	14	33.3%	22	52.4%
Professional	10	23.8%	13	31%	19	45.2%
Social	12	28.6%	13	31%	17	40.4%
Challenges	7	16%	11	26.8%	24	57.2%

It is inferred from the above table that 14.3% of women administrators have low, 33.3% of women administrators have average and 52.4% of women administrators have high level in Personal dimension of challenges.

It is inferred from the above table that 23.8% of women administrators have low, 31% of women administrators have average and 45.2% of women administrators have high level in Professional dimension of challenges.

It is inferred from the above table that 28.6% of women administrators have low, 31% of women administrators have average and 40.4% of women administrators have high level in Social dimension of challenges.

In total, 31% of women administrators have low, 23.8% of women administrators have average and 45.2% of women administrators have high level of challenges.

Null Hypothesis 1.1 There will be no significant difference in challenges and its dimensions between the women administrators working in Universities and Colleges.

Table 1.2 Significant Difference in challenges and its dimensions between the women administrators working in Universities and Colleges.

Dimensions of Challenges	Universities N = 11		Colleges N=31		Calculated Value of 't'	Remarks at 5% level
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Personal	42.18	4.12	38.55	3.98	2.45	S
Professional	40.09	3.75	38.95	4.26	1.32	NS
Social	39.27	3.84	36.40	4.09	2.12	S
Challenges	41.81	4.33	37.02	4.11	2.68	S

(At 5% level of significance, the table value of 't' is 2.00)

NS - Not Significant, S – Significant

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated values of 't' (1.32) is lesser than the table value of 't' 2.00 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is **accepted**. Thus, there is no significant difference between women administrators working in Universities and Colleges in their Professional dimension of challenges.

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated values of 't' (2.45, 2.12, 2.68) are greater than the table value of 't' 2.00 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is **rejected**. Thus, there is significant difference between women administrators working in Universities and Colleges in their personal and social dimensions of challenges and in overall challenges. While, comparing their mean scores, the women administrators working in Universities have more challenges than the women administrators working in Colleges.

Null Hypothesis 1.2 There will be no significant difference in challenges and its dimensions between the women administrators working in Government, Government-aided and Self – financing colleges.

Table 1.3 Significant Difference in challenges and its dimensions between the women administrators working in Government, Government-aided and Self – financing colleges.

Dimensions of Challenges	Sources of Variation	Sum of Square	Mean Square	Calculated value of 'F'	Remarks at 5% level
Personal	Between	62.50	31.25	2.50	NS
	Within	487.50	12.50		
Professional	Between	198.00	99.00	5.50	S
	Within	702.00	18.00		
Social	Between	56.00	28.00	2.00	NS
	Within	546.00	14.00		
Challenges	Between	38.40	19.20	1.20	NS
	Within	624.00	16.00		

(At 5% level of significance, for (2, 39) df the table value 'F' is 3.23)

NS - Not Significant, S – Significant.

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated values of 'F' (2.50, 2.00, 1.20) are lesser than the table value of 'F' (3.23) for df (2,39) at 5% level of significance. Hence null hypothesis is **accepted**. Thus, women administrators working in Government, Government-aided and Self – financing colleges do not differ significantly in their Personal and Social dimensions of challenges and in overall challenges.

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated values of 'F' (5.50) is greater than the table value of 'F' (3.23) for df (2,39) at 5% level of significance. Hence null hypothesis is **rejected**. Thus, the women administrators working in Government, Government-aided and Self – financing colleges differ significantly in their Professional dimension of challenges.

Null Hypothesis 1.3 There will be no significant association in Personal dimension of challenges perceived by the women administrators and their Age.

Table 1.4 Significant Association in Personal dimension of challenges as perceived by the women administrators and their Age.

Age (in years) Levels	25-35 (N=10)		36-45 (N=11)		Above 45 (N=21)		Calculated Value of χ^2	df	Remarks at 5% level of significance
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Low	1	10%	5	24%	2	20%	10.74	4	S
Average	4	36%	7	33%	3	30%			
High	6	54%	9	43%	5	50%			

(At 5%level of significance, for (4) df the table value ' χ^2 ' is 9.488)

NS - Not Significant, S – Significant

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated value of ' χ^2 ' (10.74) is greater than the table value of ' χ^2 ' 9.488 for df (4) at 5% level of significance. Hence null hypothesis is **rejected**. Thus, the women administrators who are in the age between 25 and 35 years, between 36 and 45 years and above 45 years associate significantly in their personal dimension of challenges. Also, 20% of women administrators who are in the age 25 and 35 years have low, 36.4% of women administrators who are in the age 36 and 45 years have average and 42.9% of women administrators who are in the age of above 45 years have high level of challenges in personal dimension.

Null Hypothesis 1.3 There will be no significant difference in challenges and its dimensions as perceived by the women administrators in their Religions.

Table 1.4 Significant Difference in challenges and its dimensions as perceived by the women administrators in their Religions.

Dimensions of Challenges	Sources of Variation	Sum of Square	Mean Square	Calculated value of 'F'	Remarks at 5% level
Personal	Between	180.00	60.00	4.00	S
	Within	570.00	15.00		
Professional	Between	45.00	15.00	0.94	NS
	Within	605.00	15.92		
Social	Between	225.00	75.00	5.00	S
	Within	570.00	15.00		
Challenges	Between	60.00	20.00	1.25	NS
	Within	608.00	16.00		

(At 5%level of significance, for (3, 38) df the table value 'F' is 2.84)

NS - Not Significant, S – Significant

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated values of 'F' (0.94, 1.25) are lesser than the table value of 'F' (2.84) for df (3,38) at 5% level of significance. Hence null hypothesis is **accepted**. Thus, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religious women administrators do not differ significantly in their Professional dimension of challenges and in overall challenges.

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated values of 'F' (4.00, 5.00) are greater than the table value of 'F' (2.84) for df (3,38) at 5% level of significance. Hence null hypothesis is **rejected**. Thus, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religious women administrators differ significantly in their Personal and social dimensions of challenges.

Findings

1. It is inferred from the above table that 14.3% of women administrators have low, 33.3% of women administrators have average and 52.4% of women administrators have high level in Personal dimension of challenges.
2. It is inferred from the above table that 23.8% of women administrators have low, 31% of women administrators have average and 45.2% of women administrators have high level in Professional dimension of challenges.
3. It is inferred from the above table that 28.6% of women administrators have low, 31% of women administrators have average and 40.4% of women administrators have high level in Social dimension of challenges.
4. In total, 31% of women administrators have low, 23.8% of women administrators have average and 45.2% of women administrators have high level of challenges.
5. There is no significant difference between women administrators working in Universities and Colleges in their Professional dimension of challenges.
6. The women administrators working in Universities have more challenges than the women administrators working in Colleges.
7. The women administrators working in Government, Government-aided and Self – financing colleges differ significantly in their Professional dimension of challenges.
8. The women administrators who are in the age between 25 and 35 years, between 36 and 45 years and above 45 years associate significantly in their personal dimension of challenges.
9. Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religious women administrators do not differ significantly in their Professional dimension of challenges and in overall challenges.
10. Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religious women administrators differ significantly in their Personal and social dimensions of challenges.
11. The women administrators whose monthly income is less than ₹50,000, between ₹50,000 – ₹1,00,000, between more than ₹1,00,000 – ₹2,00,000 and more than ₹2,00,000 associate significantly in their professional dimensions of challenges.

Recommendations

- 52.4% of women administrators have high personal challenges and so the institutions should provide counselling, stress management workshops, and mentoring to help administrators manage high personal pressures.
- 45.2% of women administrators have high challenges in professional challenges. Hence, the institutions should conduct leadership training, ensure transparent promotion, and offer continuous professional development to reduce professional barriers.
- 40.4% of women administrators have high social challenges. Strengthen networking, peer forums, and inclusive institutional practices to address social challenges in the institution.
- 45.2% of women administrators have high overall challenges. It is clear that the institution should implement gender-sensitive policies such as flexible working hours, child-care facilities, and family-friendly leave provisions.
- From the findings, it is revealed that the university administrators face more challenges than college administrators, and Government/Govt.-aided/Self-financing institutions differ significantly in professional challenges, tailor support programs accordingly.
- As challenges differ across age groups (25–35, 36–45, above 45 years), provide mentoring for younger administrators, leadership roles for mid-career, and recognition/workload adjustment for senior administrators.
- From the findings, it is revealed that professional challenges do not differ, personal and social challenges vary significantly among Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and other administrators; hence, promote culturally sensitive and inclusive policies.
- As income levels affect professional challenges, ensure fair pay scales, incentives, and financial benefits such as research grants or housing allowances.
- Policymakers should consider that over 40% of administrators report high challenges in all dimensions and frame inclusive strategies; further research should explore gender and socio-economic factors in higher education leadership.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to study the challenges of women administrators in higher educational institutions. This study highlights that women administrators in higher educational institutions encounter multiple challenges in their personal, professional, and social dimensions, which significantly influence their effectiveness in administration. The results reveal that while professional challenges do not differ between university and college administrators, university women administrators face comparatively greater challenges overall. Differences were observed across institutional types, with government, government-aided, and self-financing institutions showing significant variation in professional challenges. Personal challenges were found to be strongly associated with age, while professional challenges were influenced by income levels. Moreover, religion did not create differences in professional or overall challenges, though variations existed in personal and social dimensions. The findings emphasize that challenges are not uniform but shaped by institutional type, age, income, and social background. Addressing these factors through targeted policies, professional development programs, and inclusive support systems will not only reduce barriers but also strengthen the leadership capacity of women administrators in higher education.

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