

The Decision Making Role of Women in the Public Sector of Sri Lanka

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In recent decades a widening of access of women to the employment has been recorded. However, the participation of women in decision -making at various levels in the public sector organizations is very low and the women in the highest management levels have increased only by twenty per cent. Therefore, this exploratory study locates women managers within the context of gender relations and managerial ideology in Sri Lanka. Further, an attempt has been made to identify how they have become dialectical in the arena of management. The questions to be answered in this research are: 1) How managerial positions in Sri Lanka's public sector are distributed across male and female? 2) Are Sri Lankan public sector women managers distinctive in their managerial style? 3) How these managers have become dialectical with organizations in the process of acceding to top positions? and 4) How these managers have become dialectical with the family context in preserving such positions?

This study, analyzes the experiences of twenty five Sri Lankan women who were holding senior-level management positions in five public sector organizations in the occupational categories of Education, Accountancy, Engineering, Medical Service, and Sri Lanka Administrative Service. In carrying out this study mainly the interpretive qualitative methodology and the feminist research approach have been adopted. The findings of this study reveal that Sri Lankan women have a non-traditional management style and they successfully manage the work-family interface. Accordingly, the majority of the married women managers lead successful marriage life. However, these women managers have pointed out two reasons as main dialectical with their organizations. They are stereotypical and traditional attitudes, employer's ignorance and lack of enforcement of the regulations. According to this study, women still encounter obstacles to their advancement and the organizational constraints have thoroughly affected to the sex segregation in the managerial positions in their organizations. The sex segregation index value has been gradually increased in the last decade. This reveals that the job opportunities are not being equally distributed among males and females. Therefore, the policies and programmes have to be focused to promote equitable gender relations and division of labour within the household and the organization.

Keywords: Managers, Public Sector, Sex Segregation, Leadership Styles, Organizational Constraints, Dual Role

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