

## **Civil Service System of Pakistan: A Gender Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Women in management is now a universal phenomenon. However, they are not equally represented along the hierarchical levels of organizations. Under-representation of women in senior management positions is well documented in the management literature. This paper explains the under-representation of women in civil service of Pakistan through a gender analysis of the federal civil service system. Based on the premise that organizational structure has significant influence on the advancement of women manager the structure of Federal Civil Service has been critically examined. Analysis of three major structural dimensions i) power structure, ii) opportunity structure and iii) numerical representation points to the most subtle forms of biases built in the structure and policies of the organization as a major impediment in women's reach to the top management positions. The paper suggests for a fundamental change in the bureaucratic structure by removing structural barriers to women's entry and advancement and granting them due representation in decision making bodies to counter the male construction of gender in the civil service.

## **Introduction**

During the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century women's role in the global market has undergone a great deal of change resulting in an overall increase in their work participation. This phenomenon has occurred not only in developed and industrial countries but in the developing countries as well. Nevertheless, despite the upward trends in women's participation in the labour force, their share in administrative and senior managerial positions is extremely low. Based on the premise that organizational structure has significant influence on advancement of women managers the paper presents a critical review of structure and personnel policies of Federal Civil Service of Pakistan. Drawing upon Kanter's (1977) framework for organizational structure three broad structural dimensions of the organization i) Power Structure ii) Opportunity structure and iii) Numerical Distribution are examined to reveal gender differences. While power structure determines the level of women's access to power and authority in an organization, the opportunity structure determines the extent to which women have access to opportunities for personal growth, development, and career achievement. The numerical distribution of women in organization reflects their overall representation at different levels of the organization. It is presumed that organizations, where these factors are unfavorable to women as compared to men, would be less positive to women managers and more likely to hinder their career advancement. This paper reviews the civil service system of Pakistan to examine the extent to which these structural factors are conducive to the advancement of women civil servants.

The paper is organized into four sections. The first section briefly discusses salient features of the civil service system. The second section explains the management of the personnel functions in the Federal Government. The third section provides an overview of women's numerical strength in the civil service as a whole, at different hierarchical levels, and in various important decision making bodies. The last section presents the implications of the organizational structure for women in the civil service.

## **Salient Features of the Civil Service System**

### **The Secretariat System**

The Government of Pakistan, under the 1973 Constitution, provided a ministerial form of organization. There are about 25 Ministries; each is responsible for different portfolios. Each ministry is composed of one or more Divisions whose functions and responsibilities are defined by the Rules of Business 1973 made by the Federal Government. Each Division, in turn, is composed a Central Secretariat, subordinate offices of the Division, Attached Departments, and Autonomous Corporations (Ali & Ali, 1996).

The Central Secretariat of each Division provides staff support for making policy decisions. A Secretary who is one of the Senior Civil Servants heads the Division. The other officers in a Division are Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Section Officers who are career civil servants.

The concept underlying the Secretariat System is the dichotomy of policy making and policy implementation. While the Central Secretariat of a Division gives policy

directions, the Subordinate Offices, Attached Departments, Autonomous Corporations are responsible for policy implementation in their respective domains. The strict dichotomy of policymaking and policy implementation accords Secretariat Staff more status and prestige as compared to the Officers of the Attached Departments and autonomous corporations. Consequently, secretariat officers have brighter prospects of promotion than their counterparts in other departments.

### **Preference for Generalists**

The civil service system has built-in preference for generalist administrators, because of its secretariat system of authority. The secretariat system favors generalists over specialists. Specialists who even head the line departments report to secretaries in the secretariat who are generalists.

The systems of recruitment of officers through CSS examinations who mainly fill the top positions in the secretariat also reinforce preference for generalists. The basic qualification required for appearing in the CSS examinations is a Bachelors degree in arts or science (BA/BSc). The CSS selection system tests candidates' general educational ability through examination in compulsory and self-selected subjects followed by psychological test and interview. The CSS selection system is heavily biased towards liberal arts education and fluency in the English Language. A common pre-service training in the Civil Service Academy for probationers of all service cadres also reflects its generalist orientation.

Besides recruitment and training, several other organizational factors further reinforce the preference for

generalists. Once officers are selected they are subject to frequent transfers in the field, which adhere them to acquiring, general rather than specialized knowledge and experience in a single particular field.

### **The Cadre System**

The civil servants are classified into various occupational cadres who, prior to administrative reforms in 1973, were referred to as "services" and after, as "groups". The candidates selected through CSS examination system are assigned to different occupational cadres prior to pre-service training. The status, prestige, and promotional aspects of officers are determined by their membership with the originally assigned occupational group.

For instance, the District Management Group a lineal descendant of Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) and Indian Civil Service (ICS) still maintains a prestigious position among all occupational groups as member of this group predominantly occupy top positions in the secretariat.

### **Rigid and Formal Pattern of Rank Hierarchy**

The pay and benefits of civil servants are determined on the basis of their formal ranks in the civil service hierarchy. Under the 1973 administrative reforms, the ranks in the civil service were classified into 22 national pay grades. Grades 1 to 4 were designated for unskilled tasks; grades 5 to 15 for clerical personnel; grade 16 for superintendents; and grades 17 to 22 for officers. The fundamental pattern of grades has remained the same despite several revisions since inception.



## **The Quota System**

In 1947, after gaining independence, Pakistan inherited a civil service with disproportionate representation from different regions due to a number of historical, social, economic, and political reasons. East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) despite having the majority of the population had relatively low representation in the higher bureaucracy as compared to West Pakistan. On the other hand, even within West Pakistan bureaucracy was not regionally representative as Sind, NWFP, and Baluchistan had lower representation than Punjab.

Soon after the independence, the political leadership of Pakistan realized the importance of a regionally and ethnically representative bureaucracy and introduced the quota system in 1949. Each province was allocated a certain percentage of posts at the time of recruitment to the Federal Civil Service. Though the quota system was initially introduced for five years with the expectation that within this period it will serve its purpose, it is still in place despite the fact that virtually every reform committee/commission has recommended its dismantlement. Although the quota system has served its purpose, as the representation of various provinces in the civil service is more or less proportionate to their populations, its elimination, however, seems politically impossible due to the expected reaction from smaller provinces (Daily Jang, July 1, 1998)<sup>1</sup>. The table

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<sup>1</sup> The last extension in the time limit of constitutional provision for quota expired in 1993. However, since then, the government kept the quota system intact through Presidential orders. Recently, an opposition member from a smaller province Sind has moved a resolution before the National Assembly for extension of quota system for twenty more years (The Daily Jang, London, July 1, 1998). The resolution has been accepted, and the speaker has constituted a

given below illustrates provincial/regional quotas for allocation of different civil service posts for the year 1993:

**Provincial/Regional Quota  
For the year 1993**

**Table 1**

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Punjab	50%
Sind (Rural)	11.4%
Sind (Urban)	7.6%
NAFTA	4%
NWFP	11.5%
Azad Kashmir	2%
Balochistan	3.5%
Merit	10%

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Source: Federal Public Service Commission Annual Report, 1993

### **Management of Personnel Functions**

The Civil Servants Act 1973, incorporating the structural changes under the 1973 Administrative Reforms, provides the legal framework for the public personnel system of Pakistan. This act regulates personnel aspects such as recruitment and selection, training, job classification, compensation, promotion, discipline, and performance evaluation, for all the employees of the federal government including members of the Central Superior Services (CSS).

The public personnel functions are performed by two major federal agencies, the Establishment Division and the Federal

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parliamentary committee to deliberate the issue and report to the National Assembly. To restore the quota, the parliament has to make an amendment. The quota issue has recently become more complicated as the Supreme Court of Pakistan has declared the quota system as unconstitutional and un-Islamic.

Public Service Commission. While the Establishment Division, as provided in the Rules of Business 1973 is responsible for all the major public personnel functions, the Federal Public Service Commission acts as the central recruitment and testing agency. The commission is responsible for conducting competitive examinations, tests, and interviews for recruitment to various grades of civil service. The following are some of the major personnel functions of Public Personnel System.

### **Jobs Classification**

The civil service jobs are classified in several ways. For the purpose of the administration of salary and benefits, the 1973 Administrative Reforms introduced a unified grade system to classify all civil service jobs into 22 unified grades also called National Pay Scales (NPS). Grades 17 to 22 are assigned to jobs/positions carrying executive responsibilities ranging from entry level to top management. Grade 16 is assigned to supervisory level jobs whereas grade 5 to 15 are meant for clerical and skilled jobs, and grades 1 to 4 are designed for unskilled jobs.

The jobs in grades 17 to 22 are further classified as cadre and ex-cadre. Cadre jobs/posts belong to the Central Superior Services (CSS) that are filled at entry level (grade 17) through annually conducted CSS examination. The ex-cadre jobs/posts are mainly professional in nature such as doctors, engineers, educationists, and economists that are filled when such jobs/posts stand vacant in different ministries and departments. The ex-cadre jobs as the name indicates do not belong to any occupational group or cadre. The cadre and ex-cadre distinction has serious implications for personnel system of the Federal Government. The incumbents of cadre



posts are career civil servants and as such have brighter career prospects in terms of reaching to the top positions in the secretariat. Table 2 exhibits the number of cadre and ex-cadre civil servants in grades 17-22 for the year 1993.

**Federal Government Civil Servants in Grades 17 - 22  
For the year 1993**

**Table 2**

Grades	17	18	19	20	21	22
Cadre	1868	1901	1124	650	189	67
Ex-Cadre	4907	1831	799	263	18	7

Source: Civil Service Census Report, 1993

The table illustrates that while ex-cadre civil servants outnumber cadre civil servants at the entry grade 17, their number declines in the higher grades because of having limited prospects of progression.

The cadre jobs (CSS) classified into different occupational groups based on different functional areas. The following are the main occupational groups:

1. District Management Group
2. Police Group
3. Secretariat Group
4. Income Tax Group
5. Custom and Excise Group
6. Accounts Groups
7. Information Group
8. Postal Group
9. Commerce and Trade Group
10. Foreign Affairs Group

11. Office Management Group
12. Military Lands and Cantonment Group
13. Railways Group
14. Economists and Planners Group

The above occupational groups are further grouped into All Pakistan Unified Grades and Federal Unified Grades. The members of occupational groups that belong to All Pakistan Unified Grades<sup>2</sup> serve both federal and provincial governments while the members of the Federal Unified Grades serve Federal Government only. All Pakistan Unified Grades include the District Management Group, the Police Group, the Secretariat Group, and the Tribal Areas Group. All other occupational groups belong to the Federal Unified Grades (Husain, A., 1992)

### **Recruitment and Selection**

There are several different ways through which Federal Civil Servants are recruited. Grades 1 - 15 positions are filled by the concerned ministries and departments through their own selection procedures. The recruitment to the positions in grades 16 to 22 is primarily done through the Federal Public Service Commission. There are three avenues of recruitment to grade 17 to 22, namely direct recruitment, military recruitment, and initial recruitment.

The direct recruitment is made, through CSS examination, to various occupational groups. The CSS examination is

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<sup>2</sup>The federal government maintains effective control over provincial administrations through members of these groups. They occupy important positions in provincial secretariats, districts and divisional administration despite the fact that law and order is a provincial subject. The members of provincial civil services view these aspects of federal service as infringement of provincial autonomy.

administered by the Federal Public Service Commission, Military recruitment refers to the induction of military officers into the Central Superior Services on the recommendation of high-powered commission chaired by the President of Pakistan. Military recruitment is done both on permanent basis and on contract basis. Initial recruitment is made to the ex-cadre positions, professional in nature, by the Federal Public Service Commission.

The Federal Public Service Commission annually conducts the CSS competitive examination to recruit officers in grade 17 to various occupational groups. The basic qualification for appearing in this examination is a Bachelor's degree in any subject areas. The age limit for appearing in CSS examination is 21 to 28 years. Both men and women are eligible for this examination.

The candidates who qualify from the written portion of CSS examination are called for psychological test designed to assess their personality characteristics and aptitude for various civil service occupations.

The candidates who qualify from the written examination and have taken the psychological tests are invited to appear for interview before the Viva-Voce Board, which consists of the Chairman and Members of the Federal Public Service Commission and also one or more representatives of the Establishment Division. The members of the Board have before them, the report of the psychological test, a copy of written result, and a record of both academic and extramural career of each candidate (Government of Pakistan, 1996; Raheem and Husain, 1980).

The final result of the CSS examination is compiled on the basis of the written examination as well as a Viva-Voce. Therefore, the final selection of candidates to each occupational group is made on the basis of their position in the merit list and the regional and provincial quotas allocated to various occupational groups.

### **Training and Development**

The Federal Civil Service has comprehensive pre-service and in-service training and development programs. While the pre-service training is meant for only direct recruits who join the civil service through CSS examination, the in-service training is offered to all the civil servants at various stages of their careers. The pre-service training comprises of one-year common training program at the Civil Service Academy, Lahore for all successful candidates of CSS examinations, called probationers, and one year specialized training conducted for probationers in each occupational groups.

The rationale of a common training program is the education and socialization of probationers who have diverse educational, social, and regional background. This training helps them to equalize their educational level and provides them with an opportunity to develop strong bonds as batchmates despite belonging to different occupational groups.

In-service training to federal civil servants is offered at different stages of their career through a network of training institutions. National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) in each province offers advance courses and various short courses in administration and development for grade 18-19 officers. Grade 19-20 officers attend advanced training

courses at the Administrative Staff College, Lahore. Besides these, there are several institutes run by different departments that offer specialized training courses to their employees. Training at the NIPA and Pakistan Administrative Staff College is linked with the promotion of civil servants.

### **Performance Evaluation**

The main component of the performance evaluation is the Annual Confidential Report (ACR), which is completed by senior officers on their subordinates. The ACR consists of three parts. Part I contains personal information about the officer reported upon for example his/her qualifications, training, and position held. Part II contains evaluation of personal qualities such as intelligence, judgment, initiative, ability to plan, perservance and behavior with public, interest in economic development, observance of security measures, and punctuality. Part III of the ACR forms consists of a general assessment of the officer. The reporting officer, in this part, provides a pen picture of the personality, assesses the effectiveness of the work of the officer, and makes recommendations about his/her fitness for promotion. The ACR as its title suggests is strictly confidential, however, adverse remarks on any portion, must be communicated to the concerned officer who can make representation against these remarks.

### **Promotion**

As discussed earlier, there are two types of posts in the Federal Civil Service, cadre posts and non-cadre posts. The cadre posts in grade 17 and above are linked up in a well-defined career path in each occupational group. However,



contrary to cadre posts, ex-cadre posts do not follow strict career path and even some posts are dead-end jobs with no promotion prospects.

The cadre posts for promotion purposes are classified into two categories: 1) non-selection posts, and 2) selection posts. While the Departmental Promotion Committee on the basis of processes promotions to non-selection posts seniority-cum-fitness, promotions to selection posts are processed through the Central Selection Board on the basis of fitness. Posts carrying grade 18 and below are non-selection posts. Whereas, posts in grade 19 and higher are selection posts. Promotion to the non-selection posts is based on seniority-cum-fitness-requiring five years service and a minimum score of 50 marks in confidential report calculated in accordance with a multiple step formula<sup>3</sup> (Khosa, N., 1989).

Posts in grades 19 and higher are selection posts and requirements for promotion to each grade are clearly specified in the promotion rules. Promotion to posts grade 19 requires: 1) 12 years of service; 2) minimum score of 60 marks in the confidential reports; 3) relevant experience to the posts to which promotion is being made. The score on two criteria "quality and output of work" and "integrity" in confidential reports is an important factor in determining the comparative merit of the officers.

Promotion to posts carrying grade 20 requires: 1) 17 years of service; 2) a minimum score of 70 marks in the confidential

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<sup>3</sup> The quantification of annual confidential reports (ACR) for promotion purposes was introduced in 1982. An elaborate multi-step procedure has been provided in the Civil Establishment Code to calculate overall score of a civil servant being considered for promotion. Different minimum scores are required for promotion to different grades.

reports; 3) relevant experience; 4) completion of training at NIPA or an equivalent course attended at another institution. Quality and output of work and integrity as reflected in the score on these items in the confidential reports is given importance.

Variety of experience acquired by officer is also given a considerable weight in the decisions to promote to the grade 20 posts. Variety of experience includes work experience in field administration, autonomous bodies and corporations, attached departments, different ministries, divisions, and foreign missions.

Posts in grade 21 are senior management positions involving important policy making or extensive administrative jurisdictions. Promotion to these posts require: 1) 20 years of service; 2) a minimum score of 70 marks in the confidential reports; 3) relevant experience; 4) training at Pakistan Administrative Staff College/National Defense College. As in the case of grade 20 posts, quality and output of work and integrity and variety of experience are crucial in promotion to grade 21 posts. However, "top management potential" is an added factor considered for promotion to these posts. The "top management potential" include officer's maturity, balance, and ability to assume top management positions even at a short notice (Khosa, N., 1989, p: 250).

Grade 22 posts are the top most management positions. The incumbents of grade 22 positions are called Secretaries who head a division, ministry, provincial secretariat, or a corporation. The secretaries are appointed on the recommendations of the ministers concerned instead of the Central Selection Board as in case grade 19, 20 and 21.

## **Salary and Benefits**

The Federal Government on March 1, 1972 introduced a scheme of National Scales of Pay, Allowances and other fringe benefits. There are 22 National Pay Scales as illustrated previously. The NPS 17 to 22 are officer grades. The civil service rules, besides salary and benefits, also provide pension scheme, benevolent grants, and group insurance to provide social security to the civil servants.

The underlying principle of salary and benefits administration in the Federal Civil Service of Pakistan is strict adherence to the rank in the hierarchy. The rank instead of nature of the job and labor market consideration determines the salary and benefits attached to different civil service positions. For example, the grade 17 civil servants in different occupational groups receive the same salary and benefits despite performing jobs of a different nature. However, different occupations carry different non-monetary benefits and level of prestige.

## **Discipline**

The Civil Servants Act, 1973 and Efficiency and Discipline Rules govern the procedure for disciplinary action against civil servants. There are various grounds of disciplinary action such as inefficiency, misconduct, corruption, and subversion. The minor penalties that can be given are, withholding of promotion or salary increments. The major penalties include demotion to a lower rank or post, compulsory retirement, removal or dismissal from service. The civil service rules lay down the detailed procedure for

disciplinary action such as appointment of inquiry office, penalties, and appeal system.

### **Numerical Distribution of Women In the Civil Service**

Women in Pakistan were never prohibited to join the civil service, however, prior to 1973; their entry was not open to all the services. Women were not allowed to join certain prestigious services namely Civil Service of Pakistan, Foreign Service of Pakistan, Police Service of Pakistan. These services were considered unsuitable for women based on the perception that women might face difficulties to cope with the job environment in these services, which involve public dealings, frequent postings and transfers, assignments in hard areas, and field postings home and abroad.

However, under the 1973 Administrative Reforms, when all the different civil services were organized into occupational groups, women were allowed to join all occupational groups except the Police Groups. Hence, these reforms are generally regarded as a major breakthrough for women's entry into the civil service. However, despite the fact that women's entry was never prohibited to the civil service and 25 years have passed since women were allowed to join thirteen out of fourteen occupational groups, their representation in the civil service is still extremely low both in terms of number and power.

Women, according to the Federal Government Civil Servants Census Reports 1993, constitute 5.36 per cent of the total Federal Civil Servants in grades 1-22. In managerial grades 17-22 total shares of women is 7.82 per cent. Within ex-cadre

and cadre managerial positions<sup>4</sup>, women representation is 11.47 per cent and 2.89 per cent respectively. It is clear from these figures that while women's participation in managerial jobs in the civil service is very low, it is even lower in the central superior services (cadre posts).

It is not only that overall representation of women in managerial grades (17-18) is low, but they are also either underrepresented or not represented at all in top managerial positions, prestigious occupational groups, and other important bodies which relegate them to low position in the power structure of the civil service (Government of Pakistan 1995; Government of Pakistan, 1997).

Table 3 exhibits women's representation in various managerial grades 17-22 for both cadre and ex-cadre posts. The table indicates that women are not only marginally represented in various grades but their representation at top managerial grades 20 and 21 is very start and they are non-existent at grade 22. While in Ex-cadre posts women can be seen up to grade 20, beyond

That they are not represented at all.

**Women's Representation in Federal Civil Services  
Grades 17 -22 for the year 1993  
Table 3**

	Grade					
	17	18	19	20	21	22
Cadre	2.62	3.31	3.8	1.69	1.05	0.0
Ex-cadre	13.40	8.73	8.51	4.56	0.0	0.0

<sup>4</sup> Cadre posts refer to managerial positions in (grade 17-22) under Central Superior Services organized into 14 occupational groups. While ex-cadre posts refer to grades 17-22 positions in federal secretariat, attached departments, autonomous corporations that are not filled through CSS examination.



Source: Federal Government Civil Servant's Census Report, 1993

It is mainly because the cadre officers enjoy more power and prestige in the civil service system of Pakistan as compared to those who belong to ex-cadre category, which is, also reflected in the label, "CSS officer"<sup>5</sup>, used for these officers. However, not all the cadres/occupational groups carry the same prestige and power. Four out of fourteen occupational groups namely; District Management Group, Police Group, Foreign Service, and Secretariat Group enjoy relatively more prestige and members of these services groups/cadres mostly fill the senior management positions. Among these four Groups District Management and Secretariat Group take the lion's share of top slots (21-22) in the civil service hierarchy (see table 3). In other words, the District Management Group (DMG) dominates the civil service hierarchy, as most of the Secretariat Group's officers originally belong to the DMG before induction into the Secretariat Group.

The representation of women in the DMG and Secretariat group is low (table 4&5) as compared to other occupational groups. Even women who belong to these groups have not been able to reach to the top, as there is not a single woman in the grade 22. In grade 21, there is only one woman who belongs to the Income Tax group, which is the exception not the rule. Women are also not represented in important civil service bodies such as Public Service Commission, Central Selection Board, and Departmental Promotion Committees.

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<sup>5</sup> Css stand for Central Superior Services

**Representation of Occupational Groups  
In Top Management (Grade 21 -22)**

**Table 4**

Occupational Groups	Grade 21	Grade 22
	%	%
Secretariat	38	49
District Management	9.2	18
Foreign Service	11.6	8
Police	5.8	12
Income Tax	7.3	3
Other Occ. Groups	19.4	0
Ex-Cadre	8.7	10

Source: Federal Government Servants Census Report 1993

**Women's Representation in Federal  
Civil Service by Occupational Group and Grade**

**Table 5**

Occ. Group	Total	Grade					
		17	18	19	20	21	22
1. Accounts	14	7	5	2	0	0	0
2. Commerce & Trade	4	1	3	0	0	0	0
3. Custom & Excise	16	5	9	2	0	0	0
4. District Management	18	6	5	6	1	0	0
5. Economists & Planners	8	4	3	1	0	0	0
6. Foreign Service	18	1	9	6	2	0	0
7. Income Tax	25	4	12	8	0	1	0
8. Information	14	9	2	2	1	0	0
9. Military Land & Cantonment	3	1	1	0	1	0	0
10. Office Management	7	6	7	4	0	0	0
11. Police	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12. Postal Service	5	3	2	0	0	0	0
13. Railways	9	2	5	2	0	0	0
14. Secretariat	17	0	0	10	6	1	0
15. Ex-cadre	898	658	160	68	12	0	0

Source: Federal Government Civil Servants Census Report 1993

## **Structural Implications for Women Civil Servants**

There is no legal bar on the entry and progression of women in the civil service of Pakistan rather the Article 27 of the 1973 Constitution protects women from discrimination by stating "no citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan should be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground of sex" (Government of Pakistan, 1973; Khosa, 1992; Mehmood, 1994). However, a gender analysis of the civil service system suggests that while apparently there exists no discrimination against women, the very nature of the system and power structure within the federal bureaucracy puts women at a disadvantaged position and encourages, discrimination against women in more subtle and complex ways. Although in 1973, the government has paved the way for the entry of women and their advancement in the civil service by allowing women to join all occupational groups. In the light of the constitutional provision, which prohibits sexual discrimination in appointment in the civil services, no effort so far has been made to bring fundamental changes in bureaucratic structure and system to make the civil service gender neutral.

Occupational segregation on the basis of sex is deep rooted in the bureaucratic structure of Pakistan despite the fact that women are eligible to join all occupational groups (except Police) of the Central Superior Services (CSS). Even, the constitutional provision prohibiting sexual discrimination allows for occupational segregation by stating "However, specified posts may be reserved for members of either sex if such posts entail the performance of duties and functions which can not be adequately performed by members of the

other sex " (Article 27, Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973).

Certain occupational groups in the federal civil service have traditionally been regarded as suitable only to men because of perceived masculine nature of the jobs and functions involved in these groups. The most prominent in this category are the district management, foreign service, and police. Women were not permitted to join these services prior to the 1973 Administrative Reforms. Although there are no such restrictions on women and their presence is quite visible in the so-called masculine and prestigious occupations of civil service, women representation is still very low as compared to other occupational groups.

A possible reason for low representation of women in the prestigious groups might be gender biases in the selection process. Psychological tests may have potential bias towards masculine characteristics and tend to stream the candidates into different occupations on the basis of their personality characteristics. Not all the women who may otherwise be competent may have the same psychological profile as required for the so-called masculine jobs.

The Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) responsible for recruitment and promotion of civil servants comprises of a Chairman and 10 members who happen to be all male. For example, from the year 1993 to 1999 not a single woman was given the membership of the FPSC (FPSC, 1993-1999). In view of the statistics given in the annual reports of the FPSC regarding distribution of candidates according to sex it may not be unreasonable to believe that low success rate of women vis-à-vis men may be an outcome of gender bias against women embedded in the all-male FPSC. The table 6

clearly exhibits that while women's passing percentage is higher than that of men's in the written and oral examination it declines in the final selection when compared to the male candidates.

### Distribution of Candidates According to Sex

Table 6

Description	1998				1993			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
Appeared in Examination	2498	(89)	295	(11)	3694	(92)	30	(8)
Qualified in written exam.	484	(19.03)	69	(23)	671	(18)	60	(20)
Finally qualified	445	(91.9)	65	(94.2)	493	(73.4)	53	(88.3)
Selected for training	186	(42)	23	(35)	125	(25.3)	12	(22.8)

Source: Federal Public Service Commission Annual Reports, 1998, 1993.

Women success rate in the final selection decline sharply when it is compared to the male candidates. The data for the given years consistently show this pattern (FPSC, 1998 & 1993).

The all-male FPSC, which conducts viva voce interviews, may further pushes women into occupations felt more suitable for women. These subtle ways to discriminate against women were also pointed by some female civil servants during their perceptions on the federal civil service selection and promotion system. A female officer illustrated:

Although some women are now working in the district management group, they are handling public affairs very well but still those sitting in the selection boards believe in cultural taboos and perceive women unsuited for positions that involve much public



exposure and public dealings. There are some members sitting in the selection and promotion boards who are aversive to the sight of a female officer. These members sometime ask quite embarrassing questions such as, why are you joining civil service, why do not you marry and get settled first. Women receive the same treatment when considered for good postings and training abroad.

Thus, gender streaming takes place at the entry point which restricts women from joining the prestigious occupational groups whose members have bright career prospects and have greater chances of reaching to the top positions in the civil service hierarchy.

Despite the gender biases in the selection process, several women manage to join the prestigious groups, District Management, Foreign Service, and Secretariat Group, and according to the Federal Civil Servants Report 1993, there were about 43 women officers in these groups. However, ironically, not a single women could reach to the top managerial grade (grade 22), which can also be explained by the practice of occupational segregation even within the occupations. Despite being in the same occupational group, women may not have the same level of access to all the positions as their male counterparts. Women in the District Management Group have so far been largely deprived of field postings such as Deputy Commissioner. It is only recently that a woman has been appointed as Deputy Commissioner. Similarly in the Foreign Service women may not have the same opportunities of postings abroad in foreign Missions due to complexities of foreign posting rules

applicable to female officers. Once women are deprived of the field experience, it diminishes their chances of promotion to top managerial grades because of the requirement of "variety of experience" for promotion to grade 21 and 22. Having not served in the field administration and foreign Missions puts the women at disadvantaged positions while competing for top managerial grades. Thus, even in case of women officers in prestigious occupational groups, chances of their promotion to top grades are very bleak as a result of work segregation within these occupational groups.

The very composition of the Central Selection Board, which processes and recommends promotions to the senior management grades makes women officers more vulnerable.

Some female civil servants indicated the same during their interviews. One female officer pointed out:

For promotion annual confidential reports play an important role. These reports are critically reviewed and examined while taking promotion decisions in the selection board. The element of male bias is always there in the board as no female has ever been on the board. The board usually consists of retired justices, retired army generals, and senior bureaucrats who are all male. So in built biases in the promotion system trigger the impact of lowering down women's representation in the most senior level positions.

Although from 1980, a quantitative criteria has been in place to decide cases of promotion to senior positions, still the

Board has considerable discretion as stated in the promotion rules:

In addition to the circulation value and variety of experience the incumbents must possess Proven analytical competence, breadth of vision, emotional maturity, and such other qualities that determine potential for successfully holding the posts in top management. This potential cannot be judged by mathematical formula. The Selection Board will have to apply its collective wisdom to determine the same (Estacode, 1989; p: 249).

An all male Selection Board, using its collective wisdom to judge the management potential of women candidates, may have serious implications for women officers aspiring for senior positions. While women officers in the prestigious groups may also be the victims of potential male bias in the Selection Board, women from other occupational groups are potentially more vulnerable as being women and members of those occupational groups which are given less share of top managerial positions owing to the system's preference for versatile experience.

The NIPA and PASC training is linked with the promotion to grade 20 and grades 21 & 22 respectively. Both of these courses are residential and have three months duration including a foreign tour. Women with family and other domestic responsibilities may face difficulty to taking these opportunities at the earliest as it may not be possible for them to stay away from the family for such a long period. On the contrary men do not face such problems. Delays in

acquiring mandatory training may delay women's promotion to senior positions.

Another aspect of the recruitment, which is the induction the of military officers against 10 per cent share of CSS posts, also has negative repercussions for women officers competing for higher positions. Since women are not permitted to join the military in its officer ranks, with an exception of doctors and nurses, the induction of military officers simply adds to the number of male civil servants and lowers their representation, which may reduce their chances of upward mobility vis-à-vis men. Data given in the FPSC annual reports provides support to this argument (FPSC 1998, 93, 92, 91).

The allocation of civil service posts to different provinces/regions under quota system may also go against the representation of women in the civil service except in the case of Punjab and Urban Sind where women have more access to higher education due to conducive socio-cultural environment. Women in rural Sind, NAFTA, NWFP, Azad Kashmir, and Balochistan may not take their share in the given quota for respective province/region due to cultural barriers (Reference Table 1, page 7).

Women's low representation both overall and at different hierarchical levels has itself serious implications for the advancement of women in the civil service. The low visibility of women in the civil service hierarchy may grant them token status, which puts pressure on them. Women have to go an extra mile to prove themselves as competent as men in different occupations and at different levels in a male dominated civil service. Unless women move from a token presence to a balanced share in the civil service

positions, they are most likely to face a hostile organizational environment as a result of unfavorable and biased attitudes.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, women have an extremely low representation in the federal Civil Service of Pakistan both horizontally and vertically. This is mainly due to: 1) gender biases in opportunity structure which appears in various forms such as gender streaming, the quotas, work segregation and male-oriented structure of training; 2) low access of women to power and authority positions; 3) numerically low representation of women in the civil service which further perpetuate the system of gender inequality in the civil service. Thus, to grant women civil servants an equitable share in career opportunities would require a fundamental change in the bureaucratic structure by removing structural barriers to women's entry as well as advancement and granting them due representation in the decision making bodies to counter the male construction of gender in the civil service.



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