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Women in Public Administration in India

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ABSTRACT:

Women constitute an important part of India's population, yet their participation in public administration has historically been lower than their social and demographic presence. Public administration is one of the principal instruments through which the State implements laws, delivers public services and converts government policies into practical outcomes. Therefore, the participation of women in administrative institutions is not merely a question of employment. It is also connected with equality, democratic representation, social justice and effective governance.

The Indian Constitution provides a strong legal foundation for women's participation in public employment through Articles 14, 15 and 16 and through Directive Principles such as Articles 39 and 42. Over time, legislation, judicial decisions and administrative reforms have strengthened the position of women in public institutions. The Supreme Court has repeatedly rejected gender stereotypes and discriminatory employment practices. Decisions such as Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan, Anuj Garg v. Hotel Association of India, Secretary, Ministry of Defence v. Babita Puniya and Lt. Col. Nitisha v. Union of India demonstrate the development of substantive equality in Indian law.

There has also been a gradual increase in women's participation in civil services and local governance. Recent government data indicates that women accounted for more than 31 percent of candidates recommended through the Civil Services Examination 2025. However, numerical participation alone does not guarantee equality in decision-making. Women continue to face structural barriers such as gender stereotypes, workplace safety concerns, unequal care responsibilities, limited institutional support and difficulties in reaching senior positions.

This research examines the constitutional, statutory and judicial framework governing women's participation in public administration in India. It analyses important judicial decisions, identifies continuing barriers and suggests measures for creating a more inclusive administrative system. The article adopts a doctrinal and analytical approach based on constitutional provisions, legislation, judicial decisions and government reports.

Keywords: Women, Public Administration, Gender Equality, Civil Services, Constitutional Rights, Substantive Equality, Women in Governance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration is the machinery through which the State performs its everyday functions. Government officials and administrative institutions are responsible for implementing laws, delivering welfare programmes, maintaining public order, managing public resources and providing essential services to citizens. Therefore, the composition of public administration has a direct relationship with the character and quality of governance¹.

Women have historically faced social, educational, economic and institutional barriers that limited their participation in public life. Traditional ideas regarding the roles of men and women often associated women primarily with domestic responsibilities while public decision-making was considered a male sphere. These ideas affected access to education, employment, leadership and administrative authority.

The constitutional framework of independent India adopted a different approach. Equality before law, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity in public employment were expressly recognised. Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution provide important guarantees against discriminatory treatment and support equal opportunity in public employment.

The development of women's participation in public administration must therefore be understood in two stages. The first is formal equality, under which women must be legally entitled to compete for employment and public office without discrimination. The second is substantive equality, which asks whether women are actually able to exercise those rights in conditions that provide genuine equality of opportunity.

¹ Constitution of India, arts. 14, 15 and 16.

The distinction is important because a formally neutral rule may sometimes produce unequal results. For example, a workplace policy may apply equally to men and women on paper but may have a disproportionately negative effect on women because of existing social and institutional conditions. The Supreme Court has increasingly recognised this concern through its jurisprudence on indirect discrimination and gender stereotypes.²

Women's participation in public administration has increased over time. Government data released in 2026 stated that 299 of 958 candidates recommended in the Civil Services Examination 2025 were women, representing more than 31 percent of the total recommendations.³ The Government had also reported that women constituted 74 of 180 officers in the 2023 IAS batch.⁴ These figures demonstrate significant participation, although they do not by themselves establish complete equality across all levels and branches of administration

This research therefore examines not only how many women enter public administration, but also the conditions under which they work, their opportunities for career advancement, the legal protection available to them and the institutional reforms required for meaningful participation.

2. RESEARCH QUESTION

The principal research question of this article is:

Whether the existing constitutional, statutory and administrative framework in India has been sufficient to ensure substantive equality and effective participation of women in public administration?

The study also examines the following subsidiary questions:

1. What constitutional provisions protect women's participation in public employment?
2. How have Indian courts developed the principle of gender equality in employment?
3. What statutory protections are available to women working in public institutions?
4. What barriers continue to affect women's participation and advancement?
5. What institutional measures can strengthen women's participation in public administration?

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research are:

1. To examine the constitutional basis for women's participation in public administration.
2. To study the statutory framework protecting women in the workplace.
3. To analyse important judicial decisions relating to gender equality and employment.
4. To examine the growth of women's participation in civil services and public institutions.
5. To identify structural and institutional barriers faced by women administrators.
6. To examine the importance of workplace safety and maternity protection.
7. To suggest measures for increasing meaningful participation of women in public administration.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses primarily on women working or seeking to work in public administration in India. The expression "public administration" is used broadly to include civil services, government departments, public institutions and local governance institutions. The study concentrates on:

- constitutional equality;
- public employment;
- civil services;

²Lt. Col. Nitisha v. Union of India, (2021) 4 SCC 1; Supreme Court of India, judgment dated 25 March 2021. The Supreme Court discussed substantive equality, indirect discrimination and gender stereotypes.

³Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Government of India, "Nearly One-Third of CSE 2025 Successful Candidates are Women," Press Information Bureau. 18 April 2026. The release states that 299 of 958 recommended candidates were women.

⁴Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Government of India, Press Information Bureau, 20 April 2025. The release reported 74 women among 180 officers in the 2023 IAS batch.

- workplace protection;
- maternity and care responsibilities;
- judicial decisions;
- women's participation in local governance;
- leadership and decision-making; - institutional barriers; and
- possible administrative reforms.

The article does not attempt to provide a complete statistical study of every government department or every State in India. It primarily adopts a legal and analytical approach.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research follows a doctrinal and analytical methodology.

Primary sources include:

- Constitution of India;
- Central legislation;
- judgments of the Supreme Court of India; and
- official government material.

Secondary sources include academic writings, reports and government publications relating to women, employment and public administration.

The study is mainly qualitative. Available government statistics are used to provide contextual information, while judicial decisions are examined to understand the development of legal principles concerning women's equality.

6. MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Women in public administration refers to the participation of women in government services and institutions responsible for public decision-making and implementation.

The participation of women is important for several reasons.

Equality of Opportunity

Public employment is an important area in which constitutional equality becomes practical. If women have equal access to public employment, the constitutional promise of equality is reflected in everyday life.

Representation

Public institutions serve a population consisting of people of different genders, social groups, regions and backgrounds. The presence of women in administrative institutions can contribute to broader representation within government.

Representation, however, should not be understood to mean that every woman administrator will automatically adopt a particular policy position. Women are individuals with different experiences and views. The importance of representation lies in widening participation in public decision-making.

Public Service Delivery

Women administrators may have professional responsibilities involving health, education, welfare, social protection, policing, rural development and other public services. Their participation therefore forms part of the broader administrative system.

Leadership

Entry-level participation alone is insufficient. Women must also have opportunities to reach supervisory, senior administrative and decisionmaking positions.

Role of Institutions

The participation of women can also influence organisational culture. When institutions develop fair recruitment, promotion, workplace-safety and familysupport mechanisms, they create conditions that benefit employees generally.

7. CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of India provides the principal legal foundation for women's equality.

Article 14 – Equality Before Law

Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws. It provides the general constitutional foundation for challenging arbitrary or discriminatory State action.

In the context of public administration, Article 14 requires government institutions to exercise their powers consistently with constitutional equality.

Article 15 – Prohibition of Discrimination

Article 15 prohibits discrimination on specified grounds, including sex. At the same time, the Constitution permits special provisions for women and children under Article 15(3).

This is significant because equality does not always require identical treatment. Where historical disadvantage exists, appropriately designed supportive measures may be constitutionally permissible.

Article 16 – Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment

Article 16 specifically concerns equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.

For women entering government service, this provision is particularly important because recruitment and employment in State institutions must comply with constitutional equality.

Article 21 – Life and Personal Liberty

Article 21 has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to protect dignity and other aspects of meaningful personal liberty. The Court's workplace jurisprudence has connected women's right to work in a safe environment with constitutional dignity.⁵

Directive Principles

Article 39 directs the State towards policies securing adequate means of livelihood for men and women and equal pay for equal work. Article 42 directs the State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

These principles provide important constitutional guidance for labour and administrative policy.

8. STATUTORY PROTECTION FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is one of the most important laws protecting women at work.

The Act was enacted to provide protection against sexual harassment and mechanisms for prevention and redressal.⁶

It requires appropriate workplace mechanisms, including Internal

Committees in covered workplaces, and establishes procedures for receiving and examining complaints.

Government offices fall within the broad concept of workplace under the legislation.⁷

A safe workplace is essential to substantive equality. A woman may have a formal right to public employment, but if she cannot work safely or complain effectively about harassment, formal equality becomes incomplete.

Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 regulates maternity-related employment benefits in establishments covered by the legislation.⁸

⁵ Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan, (1997) 6 SCC 241.

⁶ The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, long title

⁷ Ibid., s. 2(0), defining “workplace” and including government-controlled or government-financed organisations.

⁸ The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, long title

The legislation contains provisions concerning maternity benefits, leave, nursing breaks and crèche-related facilities, subject to its statutory conditions and applicability.⁹

Maternity protection is particularly relevant to women's continued participation in employment. Without adequate institutional support, family and care responsibilities can affect women's ability to remain in the workforce or progress in their careers.

Constitutional and Administrative Service Rules

Women employed in government service are also governed by applicable service rules, departmental regulations and administrative policies. Such rules can influence transfers, promotions, leave, postings and working conditions.

Consequently, achieving equality requires not only legislation but also fair implementation of service rules.

9. JUDICIAL DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY

Indian courts have played a major role in expanding the practical meaning of equality.

Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan

Facts

The case arose in the context of sexual harassment of women at the workplace. At the time, India did not have a comprehensive statutory framework specifically addressing workplace sexual harassment.

Decision

In *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, the Supreme Court recognised sexual harassment at the workplace as a violation of women's constitutional rights and laid down guidelines for prevention and redressal until appropriate legislation was enacted.¹⁰

The judgment connected workplace safety with constitutional rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21.

The case was important because it demonstrated that equality in employment requires more than access to a job. Women must also be able to work with dignity and security.

The principles developed in *Vishaka* later contributed to the enactment of the 2013 POSH Act.¹¹

Medha Kotwal lele v. Union of India

The Supreme Court later examined implementation of the *Vishaka* framework in *Medha Kotwal Lele v. Union of India*.

The Court observed that even years after *Vishaka*, effective implementation remained a problem and issued directions concerning compliance with the workplace-harassment framework.¹²

This case demonstrates an important administrative lesson: legislation and judicial guidelines cannot produce equality unless institutions actually implement them.

Therefore, the existence of an Internal Committee alone is insufficient. Employees must know about the mechanism, complaints must be handled fairly and confidentiality must be respected.

Anuj Garg v. Hotel Association of India

Although *Anuj Garg v. Hotel Association of India* did not concern government employment directly, its reasoning is highly relevant to women's participation in employment generally.

The case concerned legal restrictions on women working in establishments where liquor was served.

⁹ *Ibid.*, including provisions concerning maternity benefits, nursing breaks and crèche facilities.

¹⁰ *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, (1997) 6 SCC 241. The Supreme Court recognised workplace sexual harassment as implicating fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21.

¹¹ The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

¹² *Medha Kotwal Lele v. Union of India*, (2013) 1 SCC 297. The Supreme Court examined implementation of the *Vishaka* guidelines. The Supreme Court's materials record the continuing implementation concerns following *Vishaka*

The Supreme Court rejected the idea that women could be denied employment merely because the State claimed to be protecting them. The Court emphasised that laws based on gender stereotypes can restrict women's autonomy and employment opportunities.¹³

The principle has broader significance for public administration. Protective policies should not become a reason for excluding women from particular administrative roles.

The appropriate approach is to create safe working conditions rather than automatically treating women as incapable of performing certain forms of work.

Secretary, Ministry of Defense v. Babita Puniya

Secretary, Ministry of Defence v. Babita Puniya is an important Supreme Court decision concerning women officers in the armed forces.

The Court considered the issue of permanent commission for women officers serving under Short Service Commission.

The judgment rejected stereotypical assumptions about women's professional capacity and recognised the importance of equal opportunity.¹⁴

Although the case concerned the armed forces rather than civilian administration, its constitutional reasoning has wider importance. Public institutions cannot rely on generalized assumptions about gender to limit professional opportunities.

The decision is particularly relevant to leadership because equality must extend beyond recruitment and include career progression.

Lt. Col. Nitisha v. Union of India

The Supreme Court's decision in Lt. Col. Nitisha v. Union of India further developed the concept of substantive equality and indirect discrimination.

The Court examined the effect of apparently neutral criteria on women officers and recognised that discrimination may occur even when a rule does not expressly classify people on the basis of sex.¹⁵

This is important for public administration because administrative policies often appear neutral.

For example, a promotion system may use a formally identical criterion for everyone. However, if the criterion interacts with structural inequalities in a way that disadvantages women, constitutional equality may require closer examination.

The case therefore moves the law beyond a simple question:

"Does the rule expressly discriminate against women?"

It encourages a deeper question:

"Does the operation of the rule create an unjustified disadvantage connected with existing gender inequality?"

Charu khurana v. Union of India

In Charu Khurana v. Union of India, the Supreme Court considered gender discrimination in professional employment.

The Court dealt with restrictions affecting women's professional membership and employment opportunities and emphasised the constitutional commitment to gender equality.¹⁶

The decision illustrates that professional institutions and associations cannot maintain exclusionary practices merely because such practices have existed for a long time.

The broader principle is relevant to public administration: historical practices cannot automatically be treated as legitimate simply because they are traditional.

10. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SERVICES

The civil services represent one of the most visible forms of public administration in India.

¹³ Anuj Garg v. Hotel Association of India, (2008) 3 SCC 1. The Supreme Court addressed gender stereotypes and restrictions on women's employment.

¹⁴ Secretary, Ministry of Defence v. Babita Puniya, (2020) 7 SCC 469. The Supreme Court addressed permanent commission for women officers and equality of opportunity.

¹⁵ Lt. Col. Nitisha v. Union of India, (2021) 4 SCC 1. The judgment developed the principles of substantive equality and indirect discrimination.

¹⁶ Charu Khurana v. Union of India, (2015) 1 SCC 192.

Women now participate significantly in competitive examinations for public services. Government information released in April 2026 stated that, among the 958 candidates recommended in the Civil Services Examination 2025, 299 were women, accounting for more than 31 percent of recommendations.¹⁷

The Government had earlier reported that the 2023 IAS batch included 74 women officers out of 180, approximately 41 percent.¹⁸

These figures show an important increase in women's participation.

However, a careful distinction must be made between:

1. women appearing for examinations;
2. women being selected;
3. women entering service;
4. women remaining in service;
5. women receiving opportunities for promotion; and
6. women reaching the highest decision-making positions.

Therefore, the percentage of women entering public services should not be treated as the only measure of gender equality.

11. WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Women's participation in local governance is another important dimension of public administration.

The constitutional framework relating to Panchayats and Municipalities provides for reservation of seats for women.¹⁹

This has enabled a large number of women to participate in local public institutions.

Government information in 2026 reported that more than 14.5 lakh women serve as elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions, representing nearly 46 percent of the total.²⁰

Local governance is particularly important because it places women directly within institutions dealing with everyday public needs such as water, sanitation, education, nutrition and local infrastructure.

At the same time, the effectiveness of women's participation depends upon their actual authority, access to information, training and institutional support.

Numerical representation should therefore be accompanied by meaningful decision-making powers.

12. WOMEN'S RESERVATION IN LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTIONS

The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023 introduced constitutional provisions concerning reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, subject to the constitutional framework governing commencement and implementation.²¹

Although legislative representation is distinct from public administration, the development is relevant to the broader question of women's participation in public decision-making.

It demonstrates a constitutional policy movement towards increasing women's presence in representative institutions.

13. MAJOR BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Despite legal protection and increased participation, several barriers remain.

Gender Stereotypes

¹⁷ Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Government of India, Press Information Bureau, 18 April 2026.

¹⁸ Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Government of India, Press Information Bureau, 20 April 2025.

¹⁹ Constitution of India, arts. 243D and 243T.

²⁰ Government of India, Press Information Bureau, 2026, reporting more than 14.5 lakh women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions and approximately 46 percent representation.

²¹ The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023. The Act received Presidential assent on 28 September 2023 and amended the Constitution to provide for women's reservation in specified legislative institutions, subject to the constitutional conditions governing implementation

One of the most significant barriers is the assumption that particular jobs are more suitable for men.

Administrative work can include field postings, policing, revenue administration, disaster management and other demanding responsibilities. Assuming that women are inherently unsuitable for such work can restrict opportunities.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly rejected gender stereotypes in employment-related cases.²²

Work-Family Responsibilities

Women frequently continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care responsibilities within families.

This may affect decisions regarding transfers, postings, career breaks and promotions.

The solution should not be to assume that women are less committed to public service. Instead, institutions should create systems that allow employees to balance professional and family responsibilities.

Workplace Safety

Safety is a fundamental concern.

The Vishaka judgment established the constitutional importance of protection against workplace sexual harassment.²³ The 2013 POSH Act subsequently created a statutory framework.

However, the effectiveness of such protection depends on implementation.

Transfer and Posting Difficulties

Administrative careers may involve transfers between districts or States. Difficulties can arise when spouses work in different locations or when employees have family responsibilities.

Transparent and predictable transfer policies can reduce unnecessary hardship while preserving administrative requirements.

Leadership Gap

Women may enter public services in significant numbers but remain less visible in certain senior decision-making positions.

This creates the need to examine not only recruitment but also promotion, leadership development and institutional culture.

Institutional Culture

An organisation can have formal equality while retaining informal practices that disadvantage women.

For example, networking opportunities, informal decision-making spaces and assumptions regarding leadership styles can influence professional advancement.

Therefore, gender equality must also address organisational culture.

14. FORMAL EQUALITY AND SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY

The distinction between formal and substantive equality is central to this research.

Formal Equality

Formal equality means that people are governed by the same legal rule.

For example:

"Men and women may apply for the same government examination."

Substantive Equality

Substantive equality asks whether individuals have a genuine opportunity to exercise that right.

For example:

²² See Anuj Garg v. Hotel Association of India, (2008) 3 SCC 1; Secretary, Ministry of Defence v. Babita Puniya, (2020) 7 SCC 469; Lt. Col. Nitisha v. Union of India, (2021) 4 SCC 1.

²³ Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan, (1997) 6 SCC 241.

If women technically have access to a job but face unsafe workplaces, discriminatory promotion practices or institutional barriers, formal equality may not be sufficient.

The Supreme Court's more recent jurisprudence, especially *Nitisha*, reflects this movement towards substantive equality.²⁴

This approach is particularly useful in public administration because administrative institutions influence the daily operation of government.

15. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Women's participation should not be understood merely as a numerical target.

Good governance generally involves:

- accountability;
- transparency;
- responsiveness;
- participation;
- fairness;
- effective service delivery; and
- respect for constitutional rights.

Women's participation can contribute to broader institutional representation, but no single gender can be assumed to possess a uniform administrative perspective.

Therefore, the strongest argument for women's participation is not that women will automatically govern differently. It is that public institutions should provide equal opportunities for citizens to contribute their skills and leadership.

16. ROLE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Educational access is an important foundation for public employment.

Competitive examinations require knowledge, analytical ability, communication skills and access to preparation resources.

Women from economically disadvantaged or rural backgrounds may face additional barriers in accessing coaching, technology, study materials and professional networks.

Public institutions can therefore strengthen participation by supporting:

1. accessible examination information;
2. digital learning resources;
3. leadership programmes;
4. mentoring;
5. professional training; and
6. career-development opportunities.

Training should not be limited to newly recruited officers. Continuous professional development should also be available to women throughout their careers.

17. ROLE OF MENTORSHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Mentorship can assist employees in understanding administrative structures, professional expectations and career opportunities.

A structured mentoring system can help newly recruited women officers obtain guidance without depending exclusively on informal networks.

²⁴ Lt. Col. *Nitisha v. Union of India*, (2021) 4 SCC 1.

Leadership programmes can also help women prepare for senior administrative responsibilities.

Such programmes should be based on transparent criteria and professional development rather than token representation.

18. WORKPLACE SAFETY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POSH FRAMEWORK

The POSH Act provides a legal framework for prevention and redressal of sexual harassment.²⁵

For public administration, effective implementation requires:

1. properly constituted Internal Committees;
2. trained committee members;
3. awareness programmes;
4. accessible complaint procedures;
5. confidentiality;
6. timely inquiry;
7. protection against retaliation; and
8. institutional monitoring.

The Supreme Court has continued to emphasise the importance of effective implementation of workplace sexual-harassment protections.²⁶

The existence of a legal mechanism is therefore only the first step.

Institutional implementation determines whether the protection is meaningful.

19. MATERNITY AND CARE SUPPORT

Women should not have to choose between professional advancement and family responsibilities merely because institutions fail to provide appropriate support.

Maternity-related protections are therefore an important part of workplace equality.

The Maternity Benefit Act contains provisions relating to maternity benefits, leave, nursing breaks and crèche facilities, subject to statutory conditions.²⁷

Public administration can further support employees through:

- reasonable leave policies;
- childcare support;
- suitable workplace facilities;
- predictable postings where administratively possible;
- return-to-work support; and
- non-discriminatory promotion practices.

Such measures should be designed carefully so that maternity protection does not unintentionally become a basis for treating women as less committed employees.

20. IMPORTANCE OF DATA

Reliable gender-disaggregated data is necessary to understand the position of women in public administration.

It is useful to collect data on:

²⁵ The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, ss. 3-19.

²⁶ Aureliano Fernandes v. State of Goa, (2024) 1 SCC 1; Supreme Court materials concerning workplace sexual-harassment compliance also identify the continuing importance of Vishaka and the POSH framework

²⁷ The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, ss. 5, 9, 10, 11 and 11A.

- recruitment;
- examination success;
- cadre allocation; - promotions;
- senior positions;
- transfers;
- resignations;
- retirement;
- complaints of workplace harassment;
- maternity-related career interruptions; and
- representation across departments.

Without reliable data, institutional problems may remain invisible.

Data should also be interpreted carefully. A rise in the percentage of women recruited does not necessarily mean that equal representation exists at senior levels.

21. CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY

Several difficulties remain.

First, constitutional equality does not automatically remove social attitudes.

Second, legislation may exist without effective implementation.

Third, numerical representation may conceal inequalities in senior leadership.

Fourth, women from different social and economic backgrounds may experience different barriers.

Fifth, administrative reforms must balance equality with legitimate requirements of public service.

Therefore, a single policy cannot solve every problem.

22. SUGGESTIONS

The following measures may strengthen women's participation in public administration.

Transparent Recruitment

Recruitment processes should remain transparent, merit-based and free from gender discrimination.

Strong Implementation of Workplace Laws

Government departments should ensure effective implementation of the POSH Act and provide regular training.

Leadership Development

Special leadership-development and mentoring programmes can help qualified women prepare for senior administrative positions.

Family-Supportive Policies

Childcare facilities and reasonable family-support mechanisms can improve retention.

Fair Transfer Policies

Transfer and posting systems should be transparent and consistent, while taking legitimate family circumstances into account wherever administrative requirements permit.

Gender-Sensitisation Training

Officers at all levels should receive practical training concerning constitutional equality, workplace behaviour and anti-discrimination principles.

Career-Progression Monitoring

Departments should periodically examine gender representation at different levels, especially senior positions.

Mentoring

Newly recruited women officers can benefit from structured professional mentoring.

Infrastructure and Safety

Government institutions should provide adequate sanitation, secure accommodation where required, safe transportation and appropriate workplace infrastructure.

Recognition of Merit

Women should not be treated as symbolic representatives. Their professional achievements should be recognised through the same objective standards applicable to other public servants.

23.FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study makes the following findings:

1. The Constitution provides a strong legal basis for women's equality and participation in public employment.
2. The legal framework has developed considerably through legislation and judicial decisions.
3. Women's participation in civil services has increased substantially over time.
4. Women's participation in local governance is particularly significant.
5. Workplace safety remains an essential part of substantive equality.
6. Gender stereotypes continue to influence institutional practices.
7. Recruitment alone cannot be used as the complete measure of equality.
8. Promotion and senior leadership require greater attention.
9. Maternity and care responsibilities can affect career continuity if institutional support is inadequate.
10. Effective implementation is as important as the existence of legislation.
11. Gender-disaggregated administrative data is necessary for identifying institutional gaps.
12. Substantive equality requires the removal of structural barriers rather than merely prohibiting explicit discrimination.

25. CONCLUSION

Women's participation in public administration is an important component of constitutional equality and inclusive governance. India has developed a significant legal framework protecting women from discrimination and supporting their participation in public institutions.

Articles 14, 15 and 16 establish important constitutional guarantees, while Articles 39 and 42 provide broader principles concerning livelihood, equality and humane working conditions. Legislation such as the Sexual Harassment

of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 and the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 further protects women in employment.

The judiciary has also played a significant role. Vishaka established workplace safety as a constitutional concern; Anuj Garg challenged gender stereotypes in employment; Babita Puniya reinforced equality of professional opportunity; and Nitisha developed the understanding of substantive and indirect discrimination.

Recent government data demonstrates that women's participation in civil services is increasing. The reported participation of women among CSE 2025 recommended candidates and in recent IAS batches indicates a significant change in the composition of public services.²⁸

However, increased numbers should not be treated as the end of the equality process. True equality requires women to have meaningful access to recruitment, professional development, promotion, leadership and safe working conditions.

The future of women in public administration therefore depends on moving from formal equality to substantive equality. This requires effective laws, fair administrative practices, institutional accountability, family-supportive policies, safe workplaces and opportunities for leadership.

²⁸ Government of India, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Press Information Bureau releases dated 18 April 2026 and 20 April 2025.

The objective should not simply be to place more women inside government offices. The larger objective is to ensure that women can enter, remain, progress and lead within public institutions on equal terms.

Women's participation in public administration is consequently not merely a women's issue. It is a constitutional, institutional and governance issue. A public administration that provides genuine equality of opportunity is more consistent with the values of dignity, justice and equality that form the foundation of the Indian constitutional system.

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