

Organizational Factors for Women's Success in The Administrative Sector

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Abstract: This research is part of the studies focusing on the factors promoting or hindering success in administration, it allows us to understand these success factors for women and the strategies put in place by the organization which help them to succeed in management positions. management in administration. To achieve this, we opted for a qualitative approach where 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted with executives and senior managers of a service organization. The conclusions confirm the presence of organizational factors and emphasize organizational support where balance between personal and professional life seems most essential.

Keywords: Success factors, administration, gender, mentoring, coaching, training.

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Introduction:

The performance of a company, nowadays, depends mainly on individual performance. This dimension of human capital is now increasingly recognized across all companies and even reflect the strategic nature “structures and individuals provide a competitive advantage to their organizations”. (PERETTI, Human Resource Management, 2016, p. 1). The HR process controls the career path of staff, the mobilization of skills and the remuneration of employees aiming for social and economic performance in the short, medium and long term (MOULETTE & ROQUES, 2014).

Several studies have been carried out to examine the factors that facilitate or hinder the development of individuals, particularly women, into managerial positions within administrations. The results have revealed the existence of various organizational, individual, and societal factors. Theoretical contributions have thus identified different strategies to overcome the barriers women face in strategic roles. There are indeed organization-related solutions and individual strategies employed by women to address these challenges.

In this regard, we sought an entry point for developing this article by focusing primarily on human resource management practices that help women improve within administration. This research thus aims to give specific attention to women (a gender study in administration), enabling an understanding of the key success factors for women who have reached the top of the hierarchy and the role of organizational support in their advancement despite the constraints.

Consequently, this research seeks to identify the key factors particularly organizational ones that have promoted women to senior administrative positions. In this case, we explored the kinds of organizational policies that would allow women to reach to the highest level of the hierarchy. Given this context, we opted for a deeper investigation by conducting an empirical study, framed by the following question:

What strategies are implemented by organizations to help women succeed in managerial positions within administration?

Based on this question, the following hypotheses were presented:

H1: Success factors are largely organizational and are strongly linked to organizational support.

H2: Mentorship plays a crucial role in the success of women in administration.

We opted for a qualitative methodological approach, conducting semi-structured interviews with 16 senior executives.

The results confirmed the existence of several organizational factors, such as the organizational support mentioned by (Miller, Glick and Cardinal, 2005; Ng et al., 2005). This refers to the extent to which companies provide specific assistance to their employees to help them achieve career success. Examples include coaching and mentoring programs, guidance and support from supervisors, skills development and training initiatives etc.

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I. Literature review and conceptual framework:

Literature review:

The subject of women's success in their careers has been the interest of several authors and researchers who have dealt with this issue on several dimensions. Our research, however, solely addresses the organizational aspect.

A study carried out by (Ragins et al., 1998) on a sample of women who had been successful in their careers, examined the personal and organizational reasons that led these women reach the top of the hierarchy:

- Demonstrated outstanding performance accompanied by continuous improvement in their skills.
- Adopted a leadership style that was neither overly masculine nor overly feminine, allowing them to adapt to a predominantly male environment.
- Evidence of taking on difficult responsibilities that enabled them to overcome challenges.
- The provision of a mentor who introduces them to the networks of decision-makers.

In 1992, Morrison attempted to analyze the Study by (Morrison et al., 1987) focused on the impact of the organization on women executives' access to positions of responsibility:

- Being accepted by the organization
- Support and encouragement
- Access to training and promotion
- Being assigned to challenging projects

In the context of diversity, Morrison expanded his work to study 60 companies that actively promote diversity. The conclusions of the study identified 10 practices linked to fostering diversity, including:

- Management involvement
- Recruitment of non-managers for management positions
- Internal support groups
- The use of statistics and profiles to study employment equity conditions
- Integrating diversity objectives such as promotion criteria into promotion processes
- The inclusion of diversity factors such as promotion criteria in promotion processes
- Inclusion of diversity factors in succession planning
- Diversity training
- Informal networks and support groups for women
- Work/life balance policies.

Conceptual framework:

This conceptual framework allows us to outline our theoretical research, it allows us to present the various obstacles that hinder women in their careers, as well as the factors and strategies developed by the organization that help women to achieve positions of responsibility in the administration and succeed in their careers.

The jugglers: this type of woman never compromises, she keeps everything in balance, she juggles her career with her life as a mother, she gives herself a break when it comes to motherhood or the problems associated with bringing up her children, she tries to reconcile everything.

The balancing act: these women don't take any breaks, they never take a long break from their workplace, even during pregnancy and childbirth, they never leave a gap of a year or even a few months, they try to manage everything at the same time.

Delegators: these women are often successful in their careers because they delegate a great deal to their husbands, assistants, nannies and others, which is why the presence of their entourage helps them so much in reconciling their private and professional lives.

The resigned: these women make a choice about one aspect of their life and give up on the other, devoting themselves exclusively to their professional life and having a successful career, or the opposite style of women who give up their career and settle for a simple job that provides them with material security to devote themselves to their personal life.

There are factors that facilitate, in particular, work-life balance for the four types of women mentioned in the previous section. (SCHIAPPA & BRUGUIÈRE, 2015, p. 194):

- An encouraging environment that boosts and supports them.
- A management style that recognizes maternity as a right that does not hinder a woman's career.
- Resilience to overcome challenges.
- Self-confidence.
- Good physical stamina (to cope with lack of sleep or caregiving demands)
- A relative willingness to take risks in both directions.
- A solid foundation built from years of experience before the birth of the first child.

Organizational Strategies for Women's Success in Administration:

From a strategic human resource management perspective, particularly through competency-based approaches and talent career management, organizations focus on specific employees who benefit from tailored programs and are generally mentored to occupy specific positions. Organizational support represents the extent to which organizations provide special assistance to their employees in order to facilitate their career success (Miller, Glick and Cardinal, 2005; Ng et al., 2005). This includes supervisor support, mentoring, training and skill development opportunities and guidance. (Wayne et al., 1999; Wolff and Moser, 2009) cited by (AÏT SAÏD, 2018).

Organizational support and career counseling:

- Mentoring:

In organizations, mentoring is defined as the relationship between an individual 'the mentee' and a more senior and influential superior 'the mentor' (Dreher and Cox, 1996) cited by (AÏT SAÏD, 2018). Mentored individuals benefited from considerable advantages in terms of higher salaries and promotions (Burke and McKeen, 1997; Chao, Walz and Gardner, 1992; Dreher and Ash, 1990; Turban and Dougherty, 1994; Whitely et al., 1991).

In a mentoring approach, researchers have taken an interest in the relationship between the direct superior and some selected subordinates, where these selected employees benefit from the support and advice of their superiors. Mentoring primarily serves as a tool for career development, where the mentor ensures clearer visibility within the organization. The second role involves providing psychosocial support to mentees. The interpersonal aspect reflects the mentor and mentee's friendly relationship, helping to boost the mentee's self-confidence and advising them on advancement opportunities.

According to Hurtel & Guillemette (2022, p. 24), "A mentor is someone who understands the environment, networks, and advancement opportunities (Prevosto, 2001; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). They are responsible for welcoming the mentee (Beckers et al., 2004;

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Brousseau-Deschamps et al., 2004; Lamarre, 2003). They help the mentee build connections, join networks, and integrate into groups.

According to Cerdin J. L. (Managing Careers, 2000, p. 47), a mentor serves as a role model, provides feedback, and offers social support. He identifies six main functions of mentors:

- Enhance the effectiveness of managers;
- Provide visibility and positive image
- Are a source of information
- Provide advice and support
- Contribute to career development.

According to Kram (1985), as cited by Cerdin J. L. (Managing Careers, 2000, p. 49), the mentor plays a crucial role in two essential aspects: career development and psychosocial support. The career development aspect involves the following functions:

- Sponsorship: The mentor sponsors promotions and lateral moves. mentors “open doors.”
- Coaching: The mentor supports the mentee by providing feedback.
- Protection: The mentor “protects” the mentee from opposing forces. He provides support and acts as a “buffer”.
- Challenge: The mentor provides the mentee with challenging assignments.
- Visibility: The mentor helps to increase the mentee's visibility.

The psychosocial function is based on the quality of interpersonal relations and the emotional bond that underpins the relationship. It focuses on the mentee's personal development, and has four aspects:

- Role model: The mentor is a role model to whom the mentee can aspire, particularly in terms of behavior, attitudes and values.
- Advice: The mentor helps resolve personal and professional dilemmas.
- Acceptance and confirmation: The mentor offers the mentee support and respect.
- Friendship: The mentor shows kindness beyond the requirements of the job.

Individuals who receive support from the organization are granted more opportunities than others to develop their careers. Career support or sponsorship refers to the extent to which certain employees receive assistance from their superiors to improve their career growth (Ng et al., 2005).

Direct supervisors rely on emotional and social support to motivate and empower their team members (Liden, Sparrowe, and Wayne, 1997; Ng et al., 2005). This relationship often goes beyond formal and contractual obligations, granting employees greater autonomy and responsibility.

In this context, the concept of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) was developed, representing the quality of the exchange relationship between a leader and their subordinate (Schriesheim, Castro, and Coglisier, 1999). Employees who receive quality support from their supervisors are able to achieve high levels of performance (Dreher and Bretz, 1991) and broaden their social capital through the supervisor's network of contacts, which enhances their career growth (Wayne et al., 1999). Quoted by (AïT SAÏD, 2018).

Mentoring and supervisor support appear to be the two key components of career sponsorship (Dreher and Bretz, 1991). The mentor plays a crucial role in individuals' career advancement, as noted by Cerdin J. L. (Managing Careers, 2000, p. 47).

- **Coaching:**

Coaching is one of the techniques used by managers in order to ensure effective management of their teams. It is a new form of management that helps managers to unlock the

potential of their subordinates, improve their decision-making systems, adapt to new situations and increase their ability to resolve the difficulties that hinder them.

"Coaching can be defined as the support of an individual in the development of their activities" (SEGUIN, 2005, p. 181). According to (DRUCKER, 1992), coaching is a gentle form of management that helps to reduce the challenges encountered in achieving different stages of professional and personal development. Coaching is a way of enhancing the value of individuals and bringing managers and their employees closer together within the companies.

Coaching is a term that refers to the fact of being accompanied in one's activities and professional reflections. The coach is a sort of trainer who can foster change. Performance coaching enables individuals to be more effective in their work while growth coaching focuses more on the individual, helping them to find the meaning of their personal project (CERDIN J. L., Managing Careers, 2000, p. 183).

"The term 'accompanying' refers to 'three forms of praxis that refer to specific and transversal roles: escorting, guiding, and leading.' In its broadest definition, coaching is a form of support among other types" (Pelbois & Guillemette, 2022, p. 49).

Coaching is about preparing people to face the challenges they will encounter in the future. It is essentially based on the ability to help individuals develop their personal positioning as well as their professional development:

- In terms of personal development, coaching empowers individuals to develop a progressive vision of themselves while helping them to enhance their self-image. It boosts motivation and develops autonomy and responsibility in order to prepare for senior positions.
- In terms of professional development, the coach helps individuals to identify their position within the company and its structure, as well as overcoming certain obstacles and progressing in their career through the search for possible solutions. In fact, the coach helps the individuals to discover their potential by providing them with the necessary keys to solving problems. Coaches promote performance enhancement and encourage exchange and communication, and facilitate potential inclusion in professional networks.

"Among professionals, coaching, mentoring, tutoring and supervision of the daily performance of the profession are sometimes considered to be similar practices in the field of training. In addition, several researchers consider coaching to be a type of mentoring, while others consider mentoring to be a type of coaching" (Guillemette & Jason, 2022). "Coaching and mentoring are now completely linked and complementary to each other, and can be invaluable aids to management". (SEGUIN, 2005).

Career Development Practices:

To address career ceiling situations, particularly the glass ceiling, organizations use human resource practices to help employees overcome these challenges. Five HR practices are particularly important in managing the career ceiling: performance management, training, remuneration, career development and forward planning (human resources planning) (CERDIN, 2000).

- Performance Management:

Addressing career ceiling through effective performance management (evaluation) (Ettington, 1997) involves:

- Fighting negative stereotypes about career stagnation to ensure fair evaluations.
- Focusing on actual performance rather than the potential for promotion, and training evaluators to enhance the objectivity of their assessments.
- Gather additional performance feedback sources, such as 360° evaluation, to help overcome the negative perception of stagnant employees.
- Provide continuous feedback, not only when problems arise, as this helps counter the stereotype that stagnant employees are underperformers.

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Training:

Training can be highly beneficial in managing career stagnation, as it is considered a tool for skill development. However, employees experiencing stagnation may not display performance issues unless they are trained to meet future needs. Without such training, their contributions may decline over time (Cerdin, 2000).

- **Training for the future, not for advancement:**

Companies may sometimes be unwilling to invest in the training of stagnant employees, particularly those approaching retirement age. However, younger employees may also leave the company and might not stay longer than older ones. Therefore, training needs should be evaluated individually for each employee, regardless of age, to ensure equitable development opportunities and long-term benefits for the company.

- **Train all employees to collaborate:**

This approach enables all employees to be involved in organizational changes, not just high-potential ones.

Training policies thus enable employees to maintain or develop their skills and contribute to their employability. On a strategic human capital perspective, individuals invest in their own development with the purpose of achieving a Return On Investment in terms of their career progression.

- **Compensation:**

Two aspects of compensation seem promising in managing career stagnation:

- **Pay for Performance:** Linking compensation to performance rewards employees who are facing stagnation. This can help compensate for a lack of promotional opportunities.
- **Go Beyond Financial Rewards:** In addition to extrinsic rewards, the company should also focus on intrinsic rewards, such as recognizing and valuing the role held by an employee experiencing stagnation.

- **Career Development:**

Companies can offer a variety of career development options. To align individual and corporate needs, the company must:

- **Expand Opportunities for Development:**

Instead of focusing solely on climbing the corporate ladder, employees can view their career as a series of opportunities to develop their skills, overcome challenges, and contribute to organizational goals. Beyond vertical or horizontal mobility, a stagnant employee can still be effective in mentoring or training new hires. The company can recognize and value their experiences in these areas.

- **Human Resources Planning:**

This requires the company to first identify the number of employees facing stagnation, then determine the proportion who succeed within the organization in terms of performance. This approach helps anticipate the career progression of employees, raises awareness about the causes of stagnation, and highlights ways to overcome it. It also includes training direct supervisors to provide the necessary support for these employees' development.

- **Helping Employees Identify New Challenges:**

This involves providing employees with useful information on the skills they need to develop within the company.

In addition to organizational sponsorship, support, mentoring, and career development initiatives set up by the company to promote employees' success, several organizational practices impact career development and enhance professional success (Aguinis & Kraiger,

2009; Kraimer et al., 2011; Ng et al., 2005; De Vos, De Hauw, & Van de Heijden, 2011). These include organizational sponsorship (support, managerial backing, mentoring), skill development opportunities (training), mobility opportunities, and career planning (career management and promotions).

II. Research Methodology:

The methodological approach used in our study allows us to address our research question and clearly define the scope of the study. It follows a hypothetico-deductive design, which begins with a general rule or theory and leads to a specific conclusion. Therefore, scientific research involves stating a problem and formulating the questions to be examined. It was essential to define variables and their relationships in order to understand complex phenomena, such as the factors that impact the career progression of women.

In the same context, the dependent variable refers to the variable we're trying to explain, which represents the subject of our research - the success of women in administration - which refers to the evolution of women in the administrative sector. The independent variable, on the other hand, includes the variables that aim to explain this phenomenon, namely organizational strategies.

We have opted for the theoretical framework cited in the literature review, which is defined and related to our research problem. As for data collection methods, we found it convenient to conduct a qualitative study through interviews with 16 employees at the intermediate hierarchical level (department heads and above) in a service organization. This analysis was based on thematic analysis, coding, and the analytical methods adopted in the main case, with supplementary studies presented thereafter.

Qualitative researchers often study a single setting or a small number of individuals or sites, using theoretical or purposive rather than probabilistic sampling (MAXWELL, 2012). According to (PATTON M., 2000), "the challenge of qualitative analysis is to render meaning from large amounts of data... this allows for the construction of a framework to communicate the essence of what the data reveals."

Furthermore, the choice of a qualitative method will allow us to "produce new empirical knowledge based on the restitution of reality" (Duchamp, 1989, in Marchand, 2008, p. 50). This method appears to be the most suitable for identifying and documenting the factors and strategies implemented by the company to help women succeed, which is the objective of this research. According to Wacheux (1996), the choice of qualitative methods is justified when at least one of the research objectives is to "describe a phenomenon, explain relationships or processes, predict based on constructions or theory verification, change social realities through experimental or action research, or finally, to master, which means suggesting global theoretical interpretations of the complexity of a phenomenon."

The choice of the interview technique is based on our desire to collect data that corresponds as closely as possible to the participants' reality, using methods that give participants the chance to describe, in a form of semi-structured interview, their lived experiences regarding their success; "The interview remains one of the most valuable social science instruments, because it makes use of an essential human need, which is communication. If we want to know what people think, taking into account all the distortions indicated, the best way is still to make them talk and learn to listen to them" (DUMEZ, 2015).

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A predefined interview guide is used to gather verbal responses, which are then analyzed through thematic content analysis. "The methods and techniques chosen for a given research project must be the most suitable to describe the subject being studied and to lead the researcher towards the objectives he has set himself in terms of the outcome of his work" (AKTOUF, 1987). Our guide provides a precise description of the interview process, while allowing flexibility in moderation. The goal is to structure the questions to be addressed within a set time frame, and, most importantly, to ensure the reproducibility of the interview process.

The interview guide is based on a number of phases: the first consists in briefly presenting the research, getting to know the interviewee's profile, and specifying the instructions concerning confidentiality and the recording of the discussion. The second phase is called the focusing and in-depth phase and is used to define the research subject. In this study, the focus is on various organizational factors that help to explain the success of women in administration.

Two main questions guided the interview, namely:

- **How can women, in general, succeed in acquiring leadership positions in administration?** This question aims to explore the interviewee's views on the means and strategies that help women succeed in the administrative sector
- **What are actions taken by the company to help women succeed in administration?** This question aims to identify organizational practices that promote the advancement of women. The final phase concludes the interview, and acknowledges the participant's contribution to this research.

As explained above, our analysis process involves transcribing the empirical data, coding it, and developing a thematic analysis related to the research question.

III. Research Results:

- Presentation of Results:

Analysis of the First Theme: We attempted in our research to analyze the improvement of women, that, according to our interviewees, depends on several factors. Most of them confirm that in order to succeed and access leadership positions, women must have a profile that meets the job requirements, particularly in terms of the necessary qualifications, professional experience, skills, and behaviors. In general, the majority of interviewees, especially those working in companies with established formal procedures, explain the promotion or recruitment process by answering this question.

Here are some responses presented below:

"As a senior executive in the company, in terms of internal career development, we issue a call for applications, and an objective evaluation is carried out based on the requirements of the position, which are clearly defined in the job description. We do not have any preferences between men and women; what matters to us is meeting the job requirements."

"She must to have a strong CV beyond her initial diploma, experience and disciplinary assiduity, and she needs to invest in qualifying studies and seminars."

“Our company offers women the same opportunities as men. They just have to be serious and ambitious.”

“...For example, in my team, we had a man and a woman who both applied. Since the woman performed better than the man, she deserved the position because she was more effective in terms of organization and innovation.”

“In general, we about the person who best meets the job requirements or criteria, not anything else. After all, the first thing is the competence required for the position”

“In our company, women can easily access leadership positions. We have a transparent promotion system, and the evaluation is based on managerial ability and technical competence related to the position.”

“The company offers them the opportunity to learn; if the company doesn't create opportunities, people can't develop their careers.”

The analysis of the second theme, focuses on organizational actions contributing to success, we observed that among the measures and practices that contribute to the advancement of women on an organizational level, the majority of responses indicate balance-related actions as a priority (10 responses out of 16).

HRM practices were also highlighted, particularly the opportunities offered by the company (9 out of 16 responses), followed by training to develop skills and diversity in teams, reflecting diversity management (2 responses out of 16).

Other practices mentioned include those related to Coaching (motivating, unlocking potential), and Mentoring (guidance and supervision).

Here are some example responses:

“For personal life, we have cases of very competent women who do not even want to apply because of the challenges of balancing their private and professional lives, and they end up prioritizing their family over work.”

“On one hand, it could be practices like flexible working hours to help women thrive and organize themselves.”

“In our company, we, unfortunately, don't have remote work, we lack flexibility in time management.”

“Training, support, and, above all, guidance from her team or her direct supervisor.”

“Having female managers is very important, and when you have an all-male Executive Board, it's not an ideal situation, it has to be mixed, it brings richness, a different perspective, for those who understand”

“The principle that governs all practices is equal opportunity.”

“We encourage remote work, but this depends on the nature of the job so as to avoid disadvantaging the company.”

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- Discussion of results:

Through the analysis of the qualitative results, it seemed that the factors determining success could be addressed through the determinants of access to promotion. According to the responses, women's advancement relies on several factors. Most interviewees confirm that, to access leadership positions, women must acquire a profile that meets the job requirements, including the necessary qualifications, professional experience, skills, and behaviors. This profile must also be supported by the organization to be further developed and encouraged, enabling women to manage their careers and occupy higher positions.

In general, the majority of interviewees, particularly those working for companies with established formal procedures, explain the promotion or recruitment process. The above findings confirm our first hypothesis, H1: Success factors are organizational in nature and are primarily represented by organizational support. H2: Mentoring is essential to the success of women in administration.

The success factors identified in this research confirm that for women to succeed in their careers, particularly in the administrative professions, they need to be supported by their companies. This reflects the presence of various organizational actions. Respondents place significant importance on gender issues, especially regarding the company's contribution to addressing career inequalities. Over 80% believe that practices such as work-life balance are essential and take precedence over mentorship and coaching. Other factors, such as inclusion in networks, also emerge as important, which confirms our second hypothesis.

Conclusion:

Insert here the content of the conclusion in the same format (font, size, interline) which leads to the main conclusions and which responds to the problem raised in the introduction.

Incorporating the issue of gender into the field of management sciences and exploring women's success in administrative roles remains a highly significant topic that attracts the interest of various researchers. This has been the focus of our study conducted within an Algerian service organization.

We must recall that the purpose of this research was to understand the success factors that have helped women occupy management positions in administration and achieve successful careers.

We should point out that our literature review led us to formulate this research problem:

What are the strategies put in place by companies to help women succeed in management positions?

This research question led to the following hypotheses:

H1: Success factors are organizational in nature and are primarily represented by organizational support.

H2: Mentorship is essential for women's success in administration.

Thus, we opted for a methodological framework based on a qualitative approach that aligns with the nature of our research, relying on collecting primary data through semi-structured interviews with 16 interviewees occupying managerial positions (senior and executive categories) within a service organization. The analysis process was carried out using thematic analysis to derive qualitative results, following an analytical guide structured into several steps.

Ultimately, the conclusions adduced from this study confirm the presence of organizational factors promoting the success of women in the public sector. According to our interviewees, these factors are highlighted by the encouragement of skills development and career support. Actions aimed at balancing professional and personal life play a significant role in helping women create a work-life balance, thus facilitating career progression. Additionally, individual factors, such as self-esteem and personal characteristics, contribute to hierarchical advancement. These results confirm the organizational initiatives aimed at encouraging women to occupy leadership positions in administration and reduce the challenges women face, such as discrimination and gender biases.

The research perspectives are submitted on the basis of the general obtained results, as well as the challenges encountered in carrying out this research. It would be interesting to explore individual and societal success factors, as previously mentioned in the conceptual framework of the research, and to carry out research based on different departments, such as technical fields and other sectors of activity.

It is also recommended to link the dependent variable of this career success research to other variables that affect women's entrepreneurship at micro and macro-economic levels.