



Perspective of Indian soldiers towards leadership and inclusion of women in army

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Abstract

This paper examines the views of soldiers of Indian Army towards the women in military in terms of leadership and inclusion. The level of inclusion of women in Army varies from country to country. Women have been in Indian Armed Forces for more than two decades now but they are employed only in Officer cadre in Supporting Arms and Services. With the number of women getting increased in Armed Forces there is an increase in practical and policy issues, cultural constraints of gender, and practices on participation of women in military. Do women make good leaders in Army? Are men in Army ready to be led by women in hard field areas. These are few questions which are dwelt upon in this paper. The study is based on collection of primary data by means of survey. The data collection was done from 213 soldiers of different Arms and Services. The service bracket of the personnel varied from 12 to 20 years. The results indicate that the soldiers who have worked with women officers have a positive experience in comparison to those who have not worked.

Keywords: Military/Army, Women, Leader, Policies, Soldiers, India.

Introduction

The military has been a male profession traditionally in which women work in various branches in different capacities. Research has shown that in most of the countries, whenever women were inducted into the Armed Forces, they have performed effectively in various capacities. However, women in the military may encounter two conflicting traditions, traditional military culture and female socialization¹. It has been very convenient for the military to call upon women for recruitment whenever the emergency arises and eventually dismiss them when their services are not required, forget them over and over again and deny their presence ever². The synergesis of press presentation, military policies and the historical amnesia, camouflaged the contributions and the actual achievements of women and the unfair restrictions on their recruitment and benefits³. Women are now an integral part of most of the Armies across the globe.

In India, women have served in Military Nursing Service wef 1927 in the capacity of nurses and in AMC (Army Medical Corps) wef 1943, as Medical officers⁴. However women were commissioned in Indian Army as officers in Services and supporting Arms wef 1993. They were inducted as Short Service Commissioned Officers, initially for a period of 5 years, which was given an extension of another 5 years (vide Special Army Instruction 1/S/92): in Army Education Corps, Judge Advocate Generals Branch, Army Service Corps and Army Ordnance Corps. After that gradually amendments were done, and women were commissioned in other services like corps of Electronic and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Intelligence Corps

(Int), Supporting Arms like Corps of Engineers (ENGR), corps of Signals (SIGN) and Army Air Defence (AAD) and they can serve till 14 years now. Women Officers have been in Indian Army for more than two decades now, but they are not yet inducted in combat Arms like Infantry, Armoured and Artillery units.

Most of the Armies across the globe have inducted women as soldiers too but Indian Army does not recruit women as soldiers at present. Since the military missions are no longer fought on linear battlefields as in the past, and with the rise in global war on terrorism, women's role in operations of military like the one in Afghanistan and Iraq has compelled Armies to rethink about the role of women in military⁵.

The role of women in Military is affected by the different aspects of structure of military organization, security situation of a nation, technology change effects in the society and the macro level variables within the military whereas the structure of force and accession policies of military form the organizational processes⁶.

In Indian Army, like Turkey and many other Armies of the world officers and soldiers come from all over the country and diverse socio economical backgrounds⁷. Service men have a positive attitude towards the service women and most of them are in favour of gender-mixed units. However the US men laid emphasis on creation of equal opportunities for women in armed forces while the Norwegian men laid emphasis on giving equal treatment to women and men⁸. The issue of integration and role of women in military comes forth as controversial and

problematic issue worldwide. There has been no real consensus on position of women in the military all over the world. The outcome has always been changeable⁷. More often than not the dichotomy continues to exist in most countries between the stated policies on women in military and the actual situation on ground as preferred by military soldiers and commanders.

Literature review: The militaries across the globe have gone through important changes in technology and transformation in their organization. This has changed the way in which militaries organize and fight. Regardless of the way in which personnel are accessed, the important factor that determines the number of women got into the armed forces is if the supply of males is meeting the number required to fulfill the missions of military. The higher is the need than the available male workforce, higher is the number of women employed⁹.

The expansion of utilizing the services of women in the military has become a global trend. In India, the Army started recruitment of women wef 1993 to fill in the shortfall of 11,000 personnel in the officer cadre¹⁰. After Vietnam war since less number of men were available, the Services started to choose women having higher intelligence and quality rather than recruiting the men with intelligence of lower level³.

One of the reasons for the shortfall in recruitment in the British Army is because Army as a choice for career has become less attractive for the youth¹¹. So Army is trying to attract women to fill the deficiency. With every passing year there is slow but steady increase in number of the women joining British Army¹². The research carried out in Europe and US in 1980 shows that higher the concentration of the support functions in reserves, higher will be the representation of women in reserves which will lead to greater participation of women in war time mobilization⁸.

Inclusion is the need of the hour because, it has positive consequences for individuals and organizations¹³. Inclusion is defined as the extent to which an organization allows individuals to participate and contribute to the fullest¹⁴. Across the world, the gender inclusion is evolving at different levels, in Army too.

United States Army has women both as officers and soldiers. British army also has women officers and soldiers both. Norway has passed a law under which women just like men are subject to compulsory military service, as a result qualified women who would earlier refuse when called for military service cannot turn it down now. In Oct 2014 approximately 1,000 women and 7,000 men were in first year of military training, whereas approximately 60,000 were needed. The need for qualified military personnel is growing as at present, the conflict level with countries like Ukraine, Middle East, Russia, Syria and African countries are on rise¹⁵.

In South Korea, women have been recruited in different Corps of the Army. The Korean Army has plans for recruiting women

to a bar of 5% of the total number of officers and non-commissioned officers in all their three services by 2020. It is advantageous to have women in the armed forces keeping in view the cultural integration, social representation and quality human resource acquisition¹⁶. Women make up 33% of Israeli Defence Forces and 8 times as many women are serving in military Reserves. 92% positions are available for women soldiers. 69% of all positions of Mandatory service are for women¹⁷.

Women soldiers are serving in almost all the military support positions and their concentration is high in hospitals, communication facilities, research institutions and headquarters in PLA of China. Nearly 1,67,000 number of women comprised the enlisted ranks, i.e 14.2% of the US forces in 2011¹⁸. Women soldiers are in good strength in Russian Army, but both the women and Defence Ministry view the service of women as a marriage of convenience¹⁹. French forces comprise of 1.7% of women infantry combat soldiers. The Danish military has allowed women to participate in all ranks wef 1998²⁰.

Mady Wechsler⁸ found that the role of military women expands and contracts on the basis of various factors namely technology of military, policies of accession of military, security situation of a nation, patterns of demography and values of culture in terms of gender, and pattern of structure of roles of gender.

The women and men Army officers lead in different ways has been shown by research also. Women leaders engage more in contingent reward behavior and are more transformational. It seems that this type of encouraging, inspiring and positive way of leadership will have advantages for contemporary organizations in general²¹. The Canadian research brings out that in general women leaders are effective and transformational and are mostly given a higher rating than men by the subordinates on all major parts of transformation leadership, and almost same on the balance characteristics has been found by Department of national defense. With time, women officers possessing excellent qualities of transformational leadership will stand out themselves²³.

Objectives: The research paper intends to: i. To understand if women officers make good leaders in Indian Army. ii. To analyze if men are ready for women officers leading them in Counterinsurgency operational and hard field areas. iii. To determine if women should be recruited as soldiers in the Indian Army.

Methodology

Present research is of descriptive nature and is based on primary data. The study uses the data collected by a survey with the help of a structured Questionnaire. The respondents were 213 soldiers of Indian Army, from different Arms and Services i.e. Artillery, Armoured, Infantry (INF), Army Air Defense (AAD), Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC),

Electronic and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Corps of Engineers (ENGRS), Signals (SIGS), Army Medical Corps (AMC), Corps of Military Police (CMP). The service bracket of the personnel varied from 12 to 20 years. The five point Likert scale with the range from 'strongly disagree' (1) to strongly agree' (5) has been used for measuring all responses. The responses were coded and tabulated and then analyzed. Microsoft Excel has been used to calculate the percentage of the respondents expressing their opinions. The data has been represented graphically for better understanding of the results.

Analysis: The collected data was analysed on the basis of maximum scores as shown in the following tables. As seen from the Table-1 and Figure-1, the percentage of the personnel who think that women officers make good leaders is 78.95% for Army air defence, 91.67% for Army education corps, 100 % for Army medical corps, 62.5% in Army ordinance corps, 74.19% for Army service corps, 84.21 % for Electronic and mechanical engineers, 84.06% for Corps of Engineers, 88% for Infantry, 71.43% for corps of signals.

Table-1: Women Officers make good leaders in Army.

Arms/Services	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement
AAD	78.95%	15.79%	5.26%
AEC	91.67%	8.33%	0
AMC	100%	0	0
AOC	62.5%	25%	12.5%
ASC	74.19%	22.58%	3.23%
CMP	0%	50%	50%
EME	84.21%	15.71%	0%
ENGRS	84.06%	14.49%	1.45%
INF	88%	12%	0%
SIGS	71.43%	21.43%	3.51%

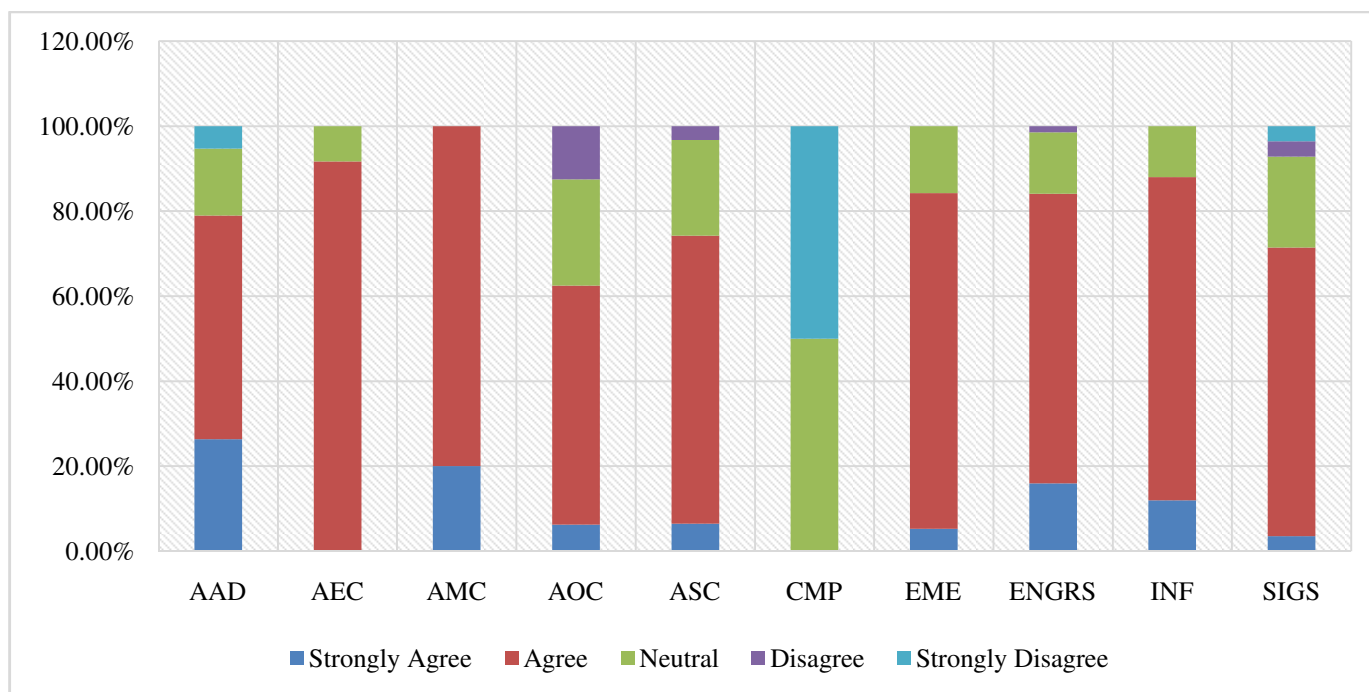


Figure-1: Women officers make good leaders in Indian Army.

Table-2: Women officers to lead men in CI Ops and hard field areas.

Arms/Services	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement
AAD	47%	0%	53%
AEC	33%	42%	25%
AMC	0%	60%	40%
AOC	31%	25%	44%
ASC	35%	10%	55%
CMP	0%	0%	100%
EME	16%	32%	53%
ENGRS	41%	17%	42%
INF	28%	44%	28%
SIGS	18%	14%	68%

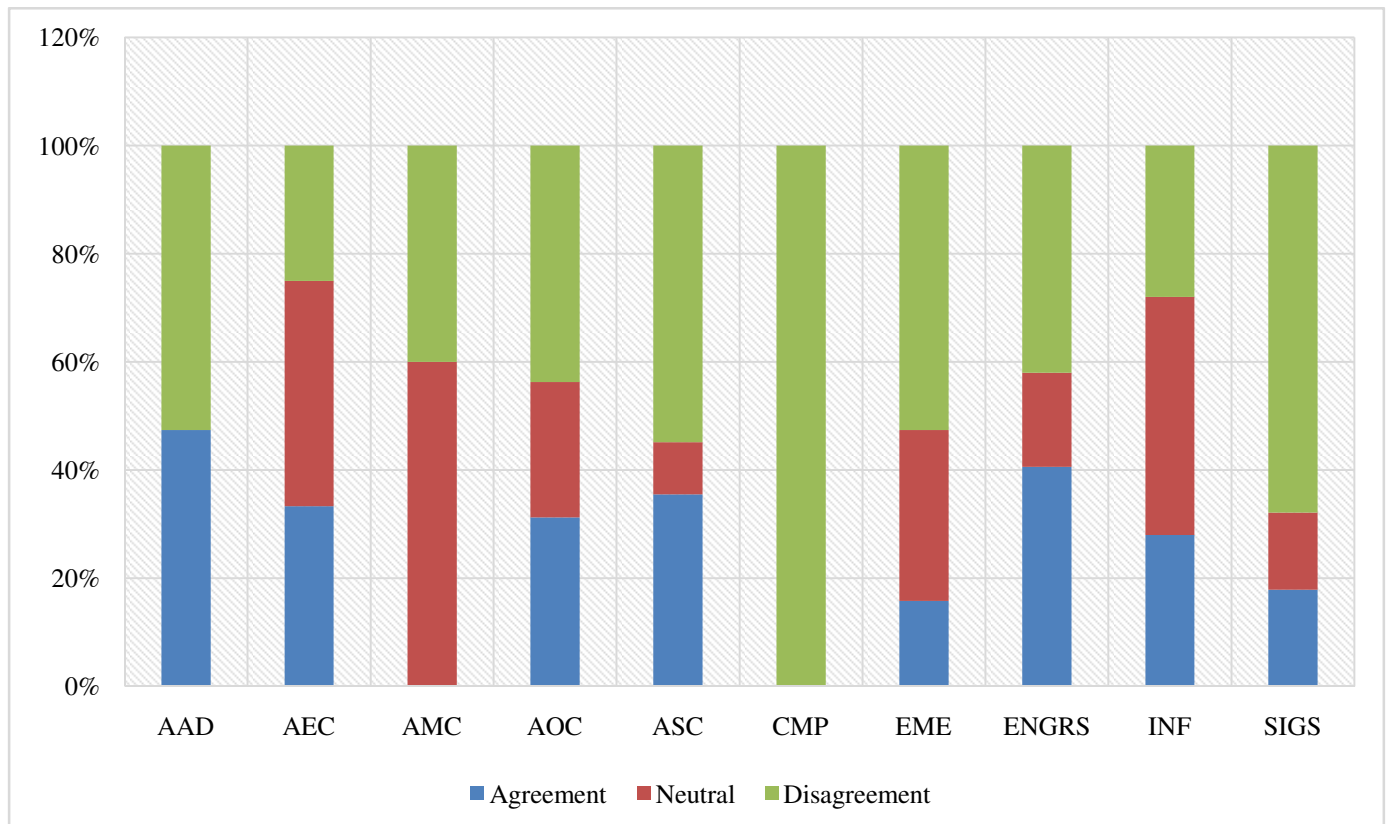


Figure-2: Consolidated Result: women officers to lead men in CI Ops & hard field areas.

Table-2 and Figure-2, shows percentage of the personnel not in favour of women officers leading them in counterinsurgency and hard field areas is 53% for Army air defence, 25% for Army education corps, 40% for Army medical corps ,44% in Army

ordinance corps, 55% for Army service corps,100% for of Corps of military police, 53% for Electronic and mechanical corps, 42% for Corps of Engineers, 28% for Infantry and 68% for Corps of signals.

Table-3: Should women be recruited in other ranks (as soldiers).

Arms/Services	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement
AAD	42%	5%	53%
AEC	92%	8%	0%
AMC	20%	0%	80%
AOC	44%	6%	50%
ASC	52%	13%	35%
CMP	0%	0%	100%
EME	32%	11%	58%
ENGRS	39%	12%	49%
INF	64%	24%	12%
SIGS	32%	0%	68%

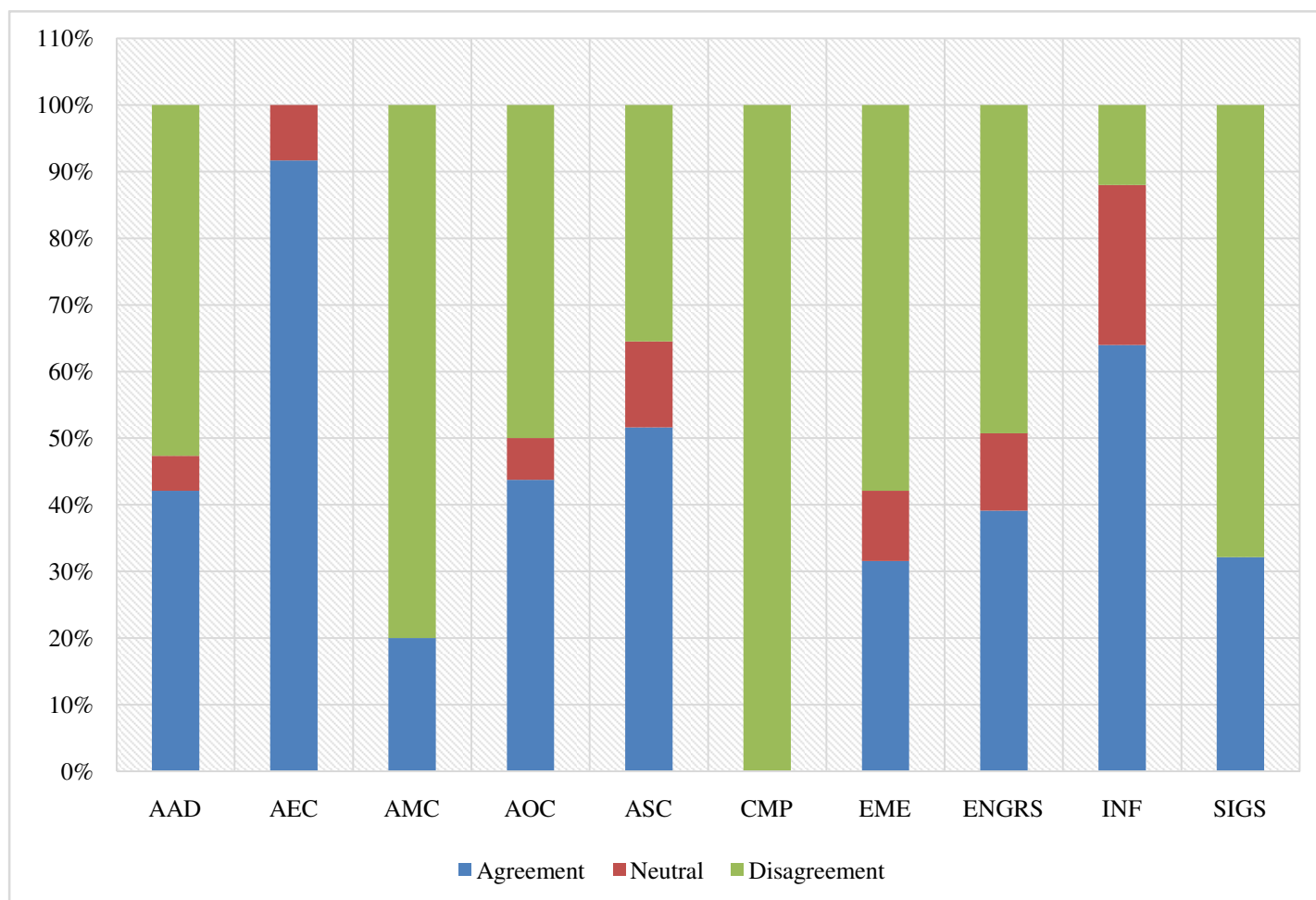


Figure-3: Consolidated result: women should be recruited in other ranks.

Table-3 and Figure-3 show the percentage of soldiers of Army air defence - 53%, Army medical Corps- 80%, Army Ordinance Corps - 50%, Corps of military Police -100%, Electronic and mechanical engineers - 58%, Corps of Engineers - 49% and Signals - 68% who are of the opinion that women should not be recruited in other ranks. Whereas soldiers of Army education corps - 92%, Army Service Corps - 52% and Infantry - 12% think that women should be recruited in other ranks (as soldiers).

Results and discussion

It is seen that majority of the soldiers of different corps feel that women officers make good leaders in Army- 78.95% for Army air defence, 91.67% for army education corps, 100 % for Army medical corps, 62.5% in army ordinance corps, 74.19% for Army service corps, 84.21 % for electronic and mechanical engineers, 84.06% for corps of engineers, 88% for Infantry, 71.43% for corps of signals however the personnel of the corps like corps of military police who have no women officers in their branch and had no working experience with women officers, feel that women officers don't make good leaders. First women officer in corps of military police was commissioned in year 2016. There are no women officers in Infantry also, but the respondents from infantry have worked with women officers in some or the other units. This indicates that the soldiers who have worked with women officers have a positive experience in comparison to those who have no working experience with women.

Majority of the soldiers of different corps are not in favour of women officers leading them in counterinsurgency operational and hard field areas - 53 % for army air defence, 25% for army education corps, 40% for army medical corps ,44% in Army ordinance corps, 55% for army service corps,100% for of Corps of military police, 53% for electronic and mechanical corps, 42% for corps of engineers, 28% for infantry and 68% for corps of signals because of the difficult and dangerous area and highly porous borders with the hostile enemy countries. It is an indication that the Indian soldiers are not yet ready for women officers as their leaders in field areas and fear their safety.

Significant proportion of the soldiers are of the opinion that women should not be recruited in other ranks - army air defence - 53%, army medical corps- 80%, army ordinance Corps - 50%, corps of military police -100%, Electronic and mechanical engineers - 58%, corps of engineers - 49% and signals - 68%, as of now since the issue of terms of engagement of women officers has not been finalized till date. Women can be recruited as soldiers once the policy issues of the existing women officer entry are clearly defined. However the soldiers of army education corps, army service corps and infantry feel that women should be recruited in other ranks (soldiers).

Implications: The research outcome of this paper provides inputs to the organization, policy formulators and the policy

executors in Army to concentrate on the limitations regarding the employment of women officers, that can be totally eliminated in the twenty-first century. The study contributes to the issue of induction of women as prospective military leaders and soldiers in Army. The objectives of any future policy should be clear keeping in mind the views of the soldiers with whom the women officers are going to function. It is very important to keep the personnel policies updated keeping in mind the international trends, different types of deployments and transforming role of military.

Conclusion

Army as an organization has certainly evolved in its approach towards women officers over a period of time when we compare with their actual policy (Army Act) of prohibiting women from joining Army. Majority of the men accept that women officers are good leaders because of their personal experiences and working shoulder to shoulder with women officers. But the attitude of Indian military soldiers towards the women in Indian Army has not evolved much as most of the men are still of the opinion that women should not be recruited as other ranks (soldiers) in Army and are not ready to be led by women officers in counterinsurgency and hard field areas indicating that the mindset of Indian soldiers is greatly influenced by the society and the culture to which they belong.

Limitations: The sample comprised of soldiers of Indian Army who are posted in the North Eastern part of the country. Perhaps the respondents from the other regions may have different approach to the recruitment of women as soldiers as well as different attitude for women officers as leaders.

Scope for Further Research: Lack of studies related to the views of male officers in Army towards the recruitment of women as soldiers and leadership skills of women officers gives a way to future research. A study can also be conducted with male officers from different Arms and the Services to understand their approach towards leading role of women officers in counterinsurgency and hard field areas.

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