

What Are the "Glass Ceiling" Barriers Effects on Women Career Progress in Jordan?

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of the glass ceiling barriers represented by the organizational practices and the existence of male culture, and the impact of family, social commitments on women career progress in Jordan.

A sample of – working mid-level women managers in Jordan are selected to answer a questionnaire on glass ceiling barriers and family and social commitments. The results showed that the impact of the glass ceiling is more significant than the impact of family and social commitments on women career progress in Jordan.

Glass ceiling term is a new concept for the Jordanian audience, because there is no real interests to explore this kind of issues, for that reason we can not find previous researches that explore the glass ceiling as a phenomenon that affects the women career progress in Jordan.

Keywords: glass ceiling, male culture, Jordan

1. Introduction

All women around the world in some stage of their life career need to break the "glass ceiling" to accomplish their career goals. The ceiling is located above the lowest middle-level management positions and prevents women from attaining higher management positions (Glass Ceiling Commission 1995). For Arabian women this ceiling is still a very hard challenge for them, although Arabian women achieve important steps in the field of leadership. For example Bahrain chamber of commerce grew from having no female members to 1785. In Saudi Arabia the chambers of commerce and industry are setting up female provision to assist entrepreneurial development. In Jordan women are now graduating in high numbers from educational institutions and more women are entering the paid work force and taking up managerial roles but even though the number of women in leadership positions is relatively low in Jordan (Metcalf (2008).

Table 1. Jordan gender gap index 2011 (rank out of 134 countries)

Overall	Economic Participation	educational attainment	Health and Survival	Political empowerment
117	127	79	89	113

As shown in table 1, Jordan Gender Gap Index 2011 indicated that Jordan performs well in educational attainment, health and survival ranks because Jordan's key strength lies in the area of education where primary, secondary, and tertiary enrolments rates of girls are higher than boys. Economic participation index is the weakest index comparing with the others indexes indicating to Jordan needs to do better integrate women into economy to reap the benefits of educational investments. So this study aims to answer the question of whether a glass ceiling is present in Jordanian organizations with a sample of mid-level women managers. This study also aims to find out the impact of the family and social commitments on women career progress.

1.1 Literature Review

The term Glass Ceiling seems to be new in the women literature. It is used for the first time in 1986 Wall Street Journal. The term described the world in which corporate tradition and prejudice blocked access to the top for

women (Smith and Crimes 2007). Glass ceiling is also described as a well enshrined phenomenon supported by conclusive evidence (Man and Dimovski 2009).

The Glass ceiling term is extended to Glass cliff suggesting that women are more likely than men to find themselves on a glass cliff (an allusion to the fact that their leadership positions are relatively risky or precarious since they are more likely to involve management of organizational units that are in crisis (Haslam and Ryan 2008). Regardless of the terms, it is visible that women traditionally encounter a "glass ceiling" and men are more likely to be accelerated into management positions by means of a "glass escalator". Glass ceiling literature presents different theoretical perspectives, explaining the barriers that hinder career advancement for women. Some of them propose barriers such as attitudinal, behavioral and structural that hinders career advancement for many women (Smith and Crimes 2007). Early perspective focused on biological differences between men and women account for the preponderance of men in senior management. Schein, 1975 indicated to some qualities that often assumed to reside in men such as: leadership ability, competitiveness, confidence, objectivity, aggression, ambition, forcefulness and desiring responsibility. Another perspective shows that the unequal career advancement of women was due to the attitudes of the more senior male colleagues who most frequently make decisions in an organization, such as: recruitment, selection, strategic planning and promotion outcomes, rather than any differences in the ability between male and female managers (Jogulu and Wood 2011). A third perspective concentrates on structural or organizational constraints facing women. These can be viewed in straightforward practical terms at the level of the organization, such as a lack of child-care arrangements, networks or role models as well as encompassing domestic constraints.

It is visible after reviewing previous studies that glass ceiling phenomenon aspects differ according to the western and eastern countries. For example Storvik and Schone (2008) study indicated that there are no organizational barriers in Norway's state bureaucracy that prevent women to arrive managerial positions, and female managers do not find any difficulty in combining both of work and family. The study dues the slow down women's movement into higher management position to the anticipated discrimination rather than lack of ambition or self-confidence. An investigation into the relative under representation of women in senior management positions in UK travel and tourism showed that the majority of respondents cited career breaks for child birth, child care and the pressures of combining work with family and personal commitments as the key issues. A substantial number pointed to male culture and the existence of an "old boys network" as well as the attitudes and behaviors of male managers in being significant explanatory factors (Smith and Crimes 2007). A Malaysian study showed that women middle managers face a glass ceiling in their working environment which inhibits the promotion of female managers and entails a barrier to the career development opportunities for women and entails that women do not have enough organizational support, such as: networking, mentoring and family friendly initiatives (Man and Dimovski 2009).

In Singapore organizations the glass ceiling barriers are studied from the aspects of corporate culture, corporate climate and corporate practices finding that the common precepts of the glass ceiling theory are supported in the Singapore context (Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Man 2010). On the other hand, Jogulu and Wood 2011 findings indicated that Malaysian respondents viewed family and personal responsibilities as their greatest impediment to attaining senior management positions; this view is strongly supported by the Australian women as well. Metcalfe (2008) paper has explored the relationship between women, management and globalization in the Middle East. It has shown that women face social and organizational barriers in the labor market and through gendered organizations and cultural practices. A Lebanese study in the banking sector found out that the presence of females in top management is rare and the odds of promotion for a male in comparison with a female is increasing as we move towards top management (Dah and El-Kassar 2009).

1.2 Jordanian Women in Statistics

Jordan is one of the Arabian countries with limited natural resources. Human resource is considered its strategic resource because the proportion of skilled workers in Jordan is among the highest in the region. Jordanian women served as a reserve labor force and were encouraged to work during the years of labor shortages when economic expansion and development plans were the highest on the government's priority list. In a 1988 study of women and work in Jordan found that cultural attitudes were not the major constraint in women's employment; the need and opportunity were more significant factors Wikipedia, Women in Jordan).

Table 2. Jordan gender gap index 2011(out of 134 countries in the world)

	rank	score	Sample average	female	male	female to male ratio
Economic Participation and Opportunity	127	0.433	0.588			
Labor force participation	130	0.32	0.68	25	78	0.32
Wage equality for similar work	84	0.62	0.65	-	-	0.62
Estimated earned income (PPP US\$)	122	0.29	0.52	2456	8581	0.29
Legislators, senior officials, and managers	-	-	0.26	-	-	-
Professional and technical workers	103	0.41	0.64	29	71	0.41

As seen in table 2, economic participation and opportunity index indicated to Jordan's weakness in the area of women economic participation especially in labor force participation and there is no specific statistics about Jordanian women leadership positions, such as: legislators, senior officials, and managers.

Statistical results of the Jordanian Labour Ministry 2010 showed that unemployment rate increase between Jordanian females to reach 21.7% in comparison with Jordanian males 10.4%. There is another big gap in the distribution between males and females according to the economic participation, female economic participation is 14.7% and male economic participation is 63.5%. Most of the employed Jordanian women are working in the education field. Since 1993 there is a Jordanian national strategy focuses on the empowerment of women in six fields, including legislation, economics, society, education and health, besides The Jordanian National Council for Women (1993) has declared its commitment to empowering women while preserving the country's religious and social identity. The Jordan Forum for Women and Business' vision is to empower women's participation in all social, cultural, legal, business and economic developments in Jordan, through education, advocacy, networking training and professional support (World Bank, 2005).

1.3 Model and Hypotheses

Three hypotheses formulate the effect of organizational practices, existence of male culture and the effect of family, social commitments on women career progress in Jordanian organizations. The fourth hypothesis formulates the effect of the glass ceiling phenomenon on women career progress in Jordanian organizations.

Organizational practices

H1: In Jordanian organizations, women career progress is affected by the organizational practices.

Male culture

H2: In Jordanian organizations, women career progress is affected by the existence of male culture.

Family and social commitments

H3: In Jordanian organizations, women career progress is affected by family and social commitments.

Glass ceiling

H4: In Jordanian organizations, women career progress is affected by glass ceiling barriers.

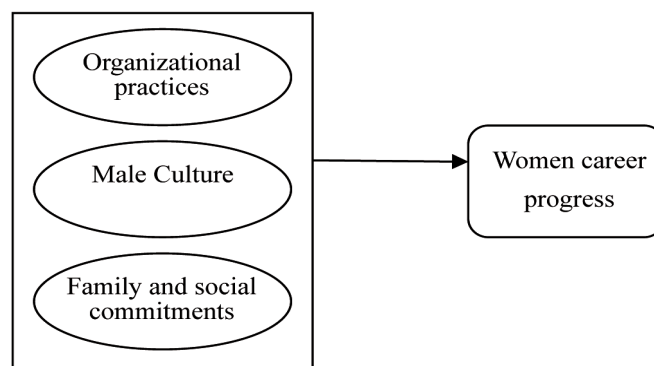


Figure 1. Study model

2. The Research Method

2.1 Participants

Mid-level women managers in organizations in Jordan are proposed as the sample for the study. The sample was selected from those organizations with mid-level women managers employed in a section, department or the whole organization. 117 useable responses were received.

Table 3. The main characteristics of the sample

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Less than 30	19	16.2
30-39	63	53.8
40-49	29	24.8
50-59	6	5.1
Marital Status		
Single	25	21.4
Married	86	73.5
Divorced	6	5.1
Number of children		
None	42	35.9
One	19	16.2
Two	23	19.7
More than 2	33	28.2
Educational Level		
High school qualification	2	1.7
Diploma	13	11.1
Bachelor's degree	83	70.9
Masters degree	16	13.7
PhD	3	2.6
Working Experience		
Less than 10 years	5	44.4
10-20 years	46	39.3
20-30 years	17	14.5
More than 30 years	2	1.7
Do you think women have traits and abilities required top positions?		
Yes	101	86.3
No	16	13.7
Do you like to hold top position?		
Yes	99	84.6
No	18	15.4

As shown in table 3, of the 117 respondents, 82 respondents (70%) are in the age less than 40. 86 respondents (73.5%) are married. 42 respondents (35.9%) do not have children while 56 respondents (47.9%) have two or more. 2 respondents (1.7%) hold high school qualification while 83 respondents (70.9%) have a bachelor's

degree. Only three respondents (2.6%) have a doctorate. The largest group of respondents 98 (83.7%) have less than 20 years of work experience. Two respondents (1.7%) have more than 30 years of experience.

2.2 Study Design

This research is considered exploratory and analytical study. The glass ceiling phenomenon now took a place for the first time in the Middle East countries. It is also considered an analytical study, because the research interest is finding the factors that influence women career progress.

2.3 Instruments

A structured questionnaire is developed according to previous studies in women careers literature (Bergman Bodil 2003, Dimovski Skerlavaj and Man 2010, Smith and Crimes 2007). The first section of the questionnaire covered demographic information. The second section used 5-point Likert scales for measuring the effect of organizational practices, existence of male culture and family, social commitments barriers on women career progress. Cronbach alpha was calculated for each scale to test the reliability and the degree to which the items are tapping the same concept.

2.4 Dependent Variable

Women career progress was assessed using three items: "women have fewer opportunities than men for career progress at work", "organizations support and trust in men more than women to reach top posts" and "when it comes to promotion to top posts in the organization women are discriminated". The Cronbach alpha was 0.781.

2.5 Independent Variable

Organizational practices barriers were measured by means of 5 items: "women career progress is hampered by organizational practices on selection and promotion", "women receive inadequate organizational support to balance between her career progress and family", "women's career progress is hampered by a lack of relevant training and development opportunities", "as a woman, if you experience difficulty at work, you don't have somebody or somewhere to turn to" and "women have to give more effort than the man to advance in their career". The Cronbach alpha was 0.703.

Male culture was measured by 4 items: "women's career progress is hampered by the attitudes and behaviors of male managers", "women's career progress is hampered by the existence of male culture" and "women's career progress is hindered by the dominance of male executive's decisions. The measure had a high internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha of 0.877.

Family and social commitments were assessed using 2 items: "women's career progress is hindered by breaks in their career due to child birth and child care" and "women's career progress is hindered by family and social commitments". The measure had a high internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha of 0.925.

3. Results

In order to test the impact of organizational practices, male culture, family and social commitments on women career progress. First, the researcher conducted a simple regression analysis to exam the effect of each independent variable. The simple regression results reveal that the first, second and third hypotheses were confirmed as expected. The results appear in Table (4). Second, the researcher conducted a multiple regression is to test the impact of the glass ceiling represented by the organizational practices and the existence of male culture. The results supported the fourth hypothesis. The results appear in Table (5).

Table 4. Simple regression results

	B	S.E.	β	R ²	t	Sig(<)
Organizational practices (1-5)	0.478	0.049	0.674	0.455	9.790	0.00
Male culture (1-5)	0.529	0.052	0.692	0.478	10.270	0.00
Family and social commitments (1-5)	0.378	0.109	0.307	0.095	30465	0.01

Pearson correlations results showed that male culture and organizational practices have a significant, strong and positive relation with women career progress. Male culture ($\beta=0.692$), organizational practices ($\beta=0.674$). On the other hand family and social commitments showed the weakest positive relation with women career progress

($\beta=0.307$). Male culture explained 47.8 percent to the total variance in the dependent variable; organizational practices contributed 45.5 percent and family and social commitments contributed 9.5 percent of the total variance in the dependent variable. Organizational practices appeared to have a significant impact on women career progress ($t=9.790$, $p<0.05$) confirming the first hypothesis. Also, male culture showed to have a significant impact ($t=10.270$, $p<0.05$) the second hypothesis was supported. Family and social commitments showed to have a significant impact ($t=3.465$, $p<0.05$) confirming the third hypothesis.

Table 5. Multiple regression results

	df	R	R ²	F	Sig(<)
Glass ceiling	2	0.739	0.546	68.415	0.00
	114				
	116				

Pearson correlation results showed that the glass ceiling phenomenon inside organizations has a significant and strong positive relation with women career progress ($R=0.739$). Glass ceiling explained 54.6 percent of the total variance of the women career progress comparing with family and social commitments which only contributed 9.5 percent of the total variance in the dependent variable. ANOVA results confirmed the impact of the glass ceiling barriers on women career progress ($F=68.415$, $Sig<0.05$). So the fourth hypothesis is supported.

4. Discussion

This research study examined the impact of the glass ceiling in Jordanian organizations from the aspects of organizational practices, male culture and the impact of family and social commitments that prevent women to reach top positions. The results confirmed all the fourth hypotheses. The results showed that the glass ceiling is being reflected by the existence of male culture and organizational practices inside Jordanian organizations more than family and social commitments. In other words, women consider that the internal culture of the organization is generally not supportive to positive attitudes towards women such as promotion, selection and mentoring. This result was in accordance with most eastern studies Man and Dimovski (2009), Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Man (2010) studies. As seen in table 3, 84.6% Jordanian females like to hold top positions in other words; Jordanian female managers are just as ambitious as male managers. So, the explanation for women have fewer opportunities comparing with men for the career progress at work, are anticipated discrimination from the existence of informal male networks and organizational policies, rather than lack of the ambition or self-confidence. Family obligations do not appear to be a great barrier for women career progress, because Jordanian female managers are capable to combine work and family. It is obvious that western countries provide facilities or at least do not build rigid glass ceiling that prevents women to reach top positions more than eastern countries. In Jordan women's employment gained its legitimacy through government amendments in labor laws, media encouragement for more liberal attitude towards women's working and national ceremonies sponsored by the royal family and government. The differences in attitudes towards women's employment frequently begin at the top positions, where as male culture appears clearly among males who believe that they perform better than women in top positions; as a result, organizational practices will be affected by the decision maker who holds a male culture.

5. Study Limitations

The main limitation of this study was related to the difficulty of reaching women managers in mid-level positions. This study needs more comprehensive research in private and public sectors especially in Middle East countries, because attitudes toward women career progress in public sector in Middle East countries seems to be influenced by other factors such as "wasta". Wasta is an Arabic word which in English means nepotism. In the workplace, nepotism is defined as individuals showing favoritism to the family, members and friends by providing them with jobs or giving them promotions based on their relationships not on competence.

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