



Investigation of the Barriers of the Promotion to Managerial Positions of Female Faculty Members of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, in Southwest Iran

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: According to the growing increase in the presence of the girls and women in the universities for the continuation of education, the job promotion is still faced with impediments. Thus, the present study investigates the barriers of female faculty members' promotion to managerial positions in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, in Southwest Iran.

Materials and Methods: The present study is a descriptive-survey research that makes use of questionnaire for the collection of data. The study sample size has been selected based on census method. Out of 245 female faculty members, 138 were administered with the questionnaires. The descriptive and analytical statistics were applied to analyze the data and SPSS Software, version 22, was employed.

Results: Out of 657 faculty members, 245 are women 32 (23%) of whom had managerial positions. The study results presented based on mean and standard deviation indicated that the organizational structure (22.87 ± 7.17), personal factors (20.09 ± 6.10), social factors (13.32 ± 3.87) and organizational culture (12.91 ± 3.84) respectively are the barriers hindering the promotion of female faculty members in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences to the managerial positions.

Discussions and Conclusion: It is necessary for the universities to promote their faculty members to managerial positions without having the gender factor interfered and considering the scientific and intellectual capacities of the faculty members and also via taking into account the legal capacities as well as based on the qualifications of the faculty members. On the other hand, the discussions on culture-building regarding the issue of women's management in various sectors of the society are of particular importance.

Key words: Promotion barriers, Managerial positions, Female faculty members, Iran

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INTRODUCTION

The actualization of the goals of the economic, social, political and cultural objectives depends on numerous factors one of the most important of which is the proportionate and optimal use of the human resources. As it is believed by many of the experts, the human beings are the axis of sustainable development and the society can be said to be developed when every individual member thereof are found having the capacity of being developed and capable of finding the appropriate methods of sustainable development achievement [1,2]. In such a society, taking correct and logical advantage of the human workforce's competencies and aptitudes is seen as one of the essential discussions in regard of development and creation of employment opportunities and acceptance of the women in the key occupations

is deeply rooted in the mindset and perception of the society of the women and their capabilities, facilities and talents [3,4]. The role of employment in the dynamicity of the human life is undeniable and, in line with this same dynamicity, the women, accounting for half of the population, undoubtedly have direct effects on the social development. When it comes to development, the coordinated changes in the economy and structures of the society for the establishment of a fair system and improvement of the human life quality is intended. Based thereon, the term "human" is not unique to the men rather the definition incorporates all the mankind, men and women [1,5]. Nowadays, in management schools and scientific centers around the globe, stress is placed on the characteristics of manager as a human being and, in such an emphasis, there is never made a separation between men and women [6]. Nowadays, women account for half of the world population and two third of the tasks carried out worldwide are performed by the women. The women's approach to employment outside the home is influenced by the cultural, social,

political and economic systems as well as the women's personality system. As caused by the assigned tasks, the women should stay accountable to certain expectations. The women have learnt through sociability at home and in school that employment outside the home means working in a place that we call organization which is, of course, defined in a clear-cut manner [7]. The theoreticians of the sociology area and the occupation psychologists in the recent decades have paid a great deal of attention to gender and job selection process have asserted that the job selection process and job promotion possess different characteristics, especially for the educated women as compared to men in such a manner that the studies have shown that the gender of the faculty members influences their job satisfaction [4]. In regard of the position of Iran's educated women, there are studies and researches performed and all of them have emphasized on the idea that "gender is the determinant of their selection and the women are less frequently seen in the managerial positions in the universities and, although their participation in the low and intermediate managerial ranks of the universities has been increased, no tangible change has occurred in the higher managerial ranks and the decision-making committees and councils of the universities are still in the hands of the men. The most important reasons giving rise to such a situation are culture, patriarchal tendencies and distrust in the women's abilities in the universities [8]. To describe such a situation, the metaphor "glass walls" has been used in the management literature by which the invisible vertical barriers and gender separation at work are intended. On the other hand, there is an impermeable barrier in the organizations that prevents the women from promoting beyond the defined limits and this is so-called as glass ceiling. Due to the existence of such a barrier, the women are extensively barred from ascending to the higher levels of management. The glass walls act as barriers to the occupational motility and the glass ceiling acts as a barrier to the job promotion of the women in the organizations [7,9]. In a review study, Gilavand *et al.* considered the prior studies and classified the barriers of the women's promotion to managerial positions in Iran's universities into seven categories, named dominance of the patriarchal culture in the society and universities in Iran, problems stemming from the women's dual roles (conflict between family and work), false beliefs and attitudes of the society, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem amongst the women, absence of equal educational opportunities, women employment and legal issues and the absence of an appropriate work solution in the universities [8]. The results of a study in 2007 demonstrated that 27% of the female faculty members working in state universities of Tehran have managerial positions. On the contrary, the male faculty members accounted for 46% of the managers in Tehran's state universities [10]. Another study in 2012 showed that 28% of the faculty members in Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences, in Yazd, in the center of Iran, have managerial positions in various levels and 44.4% of them was department heads [11].

In between, the main and essential issue that is of great importance in social studies and planning is that what are the primary barriers and inhibitive factors hindering the installation of women in managerial positions? The women's interest in acquiring higher education degrees and their zeal for the performing of educational and research activities in the universities are undeniable facts of the today's Iranian society [12]. However, the female faculty members of the universities like many of the nonacademic women are confronted with problems that can influence their affective, attitudinal and functional levels. The enhancement of education level, entry to the business arena and increase in the social participation are amongst the changes experienced by a considerable fraction of the Iranian women during the recent years. The process is accompanied by new opportunities and challenges for them. The female faculty members from Iran's medical sciences universities are simultaneously working in such areas as teaching, researching, working in clinical environment and treating of patients and they, occasionally, hold executive responsibilities according to their higher education levels in various specialized and extra-specialized degrees; furthermore, they sometimes have to shoulder the housework and taking care of the spouse and children. Thus, the present study investigates the barriers of the promotion to managerial positions of female faculty members from Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, in Southwest Iran.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

There are 657 faculty members working in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, in Southwest Iran out of whom 245 individuals are female. Out of this number of the female faculty members, 8 work as professors, 29 as associate professor, 172 as assistant professors and 36 as instructors. The university also has 7434 university students in BA to specialized degrees in various majors. Out of the 72 departments in this university, 18 educational departments are in the hands of the female faculty members. This article is extracted from a research granted by Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran. (No. U-96135 and Ethics Code No. IR.AJUMS.REC.2017.864) The present study is a descriptive-survey research. The similar studies were firstly investigated based on a library method based on which the main barriers of the women's achievement of the managerial positions were identified and a questionnaire was codified accordingly. The female faculty members from Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, in Southwest Iran constituted the study population of the present study. They topped to a number of 245 female faculty members at the time of the study initiation. The study sample size included 245 female faculty members who were selected based on a census method and questionnaires were distributed amongst all of them and 138 questionnaires were in the end collected. The questionnaires were consisted of two parts. The first part pertained to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their age, service years, scientific

rank, marital status, education level, recruitment type and having or not having managerial position. The second part contained 29 questions that evaluated the barriers of female faculty members' promotion to the managerial positions. The similar studies were firstly investigated based on a library method. The promotion barriers were generally grouped into four sets, called the organizational structure, organizational culture, personal factors and social factors (mores and attitudes common in the society). The options constituting each of these barriers can be observed in Table 1. Since the aforesaid questionnaire was designed based on the factors identified in the study, the credibility of its content was verified and confirmed by several faculty members of the university. The questionnaire reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha equal to 87%. Moreover, Chi Square test was applied to investigate the existence of the relationship between such variables as work history, marital status and scientific rank of the female faculty members with having managerial position. In the second part of the questionnaire, chi square test was employed to determine the relationship between the organizational structure, organizational culture, social factors and personal factors with the lack of female faculty members' promotion to the managerial positions. Descriptive and analytical statistics were utilized to analyze the data in SPSS software, version 22.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents a perfect explanation of all the questions. All 29 questions have been embedded within the framework of four main aspects: organizational structure (9 questions), personal factors (10 questions), organizational culture (5 questions) and social factors (5 questions).

Table 2 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the study sample size reaching in number to 138 female faculty members from Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, in Southwest Iran. Based on the Table 2, 17.4% of them are single and 82.6% are married. In addition, 8.7% of them are instructors, 73.8% are assistant professor, 53.4% are associate professors and 2.1% are professors. Also, 42.03% of them are formally recruited, 30.43% of them are periodically recruited, 22.5% are service-obliged and 3.62% of them were contracted. The other specifications have been listed in Table 2. Also, 32 (23%) female faculty members had announced that they are working in managerial positions.

Table 3 gives the results obtained from the investigation of the respondents' notions regarding the effect of the main study variables (organizational structure,

Table 1: All questionnaire options

Main factors	Indicators
Organizational structure	1 Absence of fair policy in the selection of faculty members
	2 Absence of equal educational opportunities for female and male faculty members
	3 The existence of legal limitations and work environment conditions for the female faculty members
	4 The absence of university's support of the female faculty members
	5 Unjust reward payments for the numerous work responsibilities of the female faculty members
	6 The absence of successful managerial role-models for female faculty member in the universities
	7 The larger number of male faculty members in contrast to female faculty members in the universities
	8 The unavailability of facilities for proper caretaking of the children of the female faculty members in university
	9 The female faculty members' need for work dismissal
Personal factors	1 Creation of balance between work and housework
	2 Lack of willingness for accepting the consequences of the decisions by the female faculty members
	3 Lack of motivation for the accepting of job responsibilities and promotion in the female faculty members
	4 Female faculty members' unwillingness for performing teamwork
	5 Female faculty members' weak imagination of their capabilities
	6 The lack of the sense of development-seeking in female faculty members
	7 Low creativity of the female faculty members
	8 Female faculty members' inability in administrating the affairs under critical conditions
	9 Sentimentality of the female faculty members in decision-making
	10 Lower sophistication of the female faculty members
Organizational culture	1 Female faculty members' worries about the male coworkers' perception of their active presence
	2 Existence of patriarchy in university
	3 Men's distrust of female faculty members in managerial positions
	4 Lack of male workers' welcoming of the female faculty members
	5 Limitation of the social relationships between female faculty members with their male counterparts
Social factors	1 The most important duty of women is considered to be taking care and protection of children and family
	2 Placing women in perfect obedience situation at home
	3 Institutionalization of gender cliché characteristics from the very beginning of childhood by the families
	4 Knowing some tasks solely specific to men
	5 Giving more priority to the men in the society

organizational culture, personal factors and social factors) on the lack of promotion of the female faculty members to managerial positions in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences considering the intensity and the weakness of the questionnaire choices (very effective, effective, less effective, not effective). The results indicated in an order of priority that 37.2% of the respondents have selected the option “very effective” for the organizational structure. Also, 37.4%

of the respondents selected the option “effective” for the social factors; 33% of the respondents selected the option “effective” for the organizational culture and finally 36.2% of the respondents selected the option “not effective” for the personal factors.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the female faculty members

Variables	Number and percentage
Marriage	***
Single	24 (17.4%)
Married	114 (82.6%)
Sum	138-(100%)
Scientific degree	***
Instructor	12 (8.7%)
Assistant professor	102 (73.8%)
Associate professor	21 (15.4%)
Professor	3 (2.1%)
Sum	138-(100%)
Education degree	***
MA	12 (8.7%)
Specialized PhD	120 (87%)
Specialty	6 (4.3%)
Sum	138-(100%)
Recruitment type	***
Formal	58 (42.03%)
Periodical	42 (30.43%)
Service-obliged	31 (22.46%)
Contractual	5 (3.62%)
Sum	138-(100%)
Service years	***
Below 5 years	36 (26.1%)
Between 5 and 10 years	10 (7.3%)
Between 11 and 19 years	54 (39.1%)
Between 20 and 25 years	18 (13%)
Over 25 years	20 (14.5%)
Sum	138-(100%)
Age in years	***
25-30	24 (17.4%)
30-35	54 (39.2%)
35-40	18 (13%)
40-45	12 (8.7%)
45-50	18 (13%)
50-55	12 (8.7%)
sum	138-(100%)

Based on Table 4, the mean score of the female faculty members’ attitudes towards the lack of female faculty members’ promotion to managerial positions in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences has been obtained equal to 67.39 with a standard deviation of 20.84. Moreover, the study results based on mean and standard deviation indicated that the organizational structure (22.87 ± 7.17), personal factors (20.09 ± 6.10), social factors (13.32 ± 3.87) and organizational culture (12.91 ± 3.84) are respectively the barriers of the female faculty members’ promotion to managerial positions in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.

Table 4: The mean and standard deviation of the female faculty members’ attitudes and main study variables

Main factors	Standard deviation ± mean
Attitudes	67.39 ± 20.84
Organizational Structure	22.87 ± 7.17
Personal Factors	20.09 ± 6.10
Social Factors	13.32 ± 3.87
Organizational Culture	12.91 ± 3.84

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the study results expressed in the form of mean and standard deviation, it can be claimed that the main study variables, to wit organizational structure, personal factors, social factors and organizational culture, respectively play the most prominent roles in the lack of female faculty members’ promotion to managerial positions in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, in Southwest Iran. The study findings are consistent with the results obtained in the researches by Gilavand et al. [8], Mooghali et al. [13], Bordbar et al. [11], Hashemi et al. [14], Mau et al. [10], Sarfaraz et al. [15], Mirghafoori [16], Goudarzvand et al. [17] and Nasiri Velik Bani et al. [18] and they are not in compliance with the results obtained in the studies by Mortazavi et al. [19]. During late 2017, Gilavand et al. performed a review research considering the prior studies and categorized the barriers to the promotion of

Table 3: The effect of the main study variables on the lack of the female faculty members’ promotion to managerial positions

Response	Organizational structure		Organizational culture		Personal factors		Social factors	
	Number of responses	Percentage	Number of responses	Percentage	Number of responses	Percentage	Number of responses	Percentage
Not effective	210	3.9	126	18.3	498	36.2	120	17.4
Less effective	264	16.9	156	22.6	384	27.8	132	19.2
Effective	462	21.2	228	33	318	23	258	37.4
Very effective	258	37.2	156	22.6	108	7.8	150	21.7
Unanswered	48	20.8	24	3.5	72	5.2	30	4.3

female faculty members to the managerial positions in Iran's universities into seven indicators: the dominance of the patriarchal culture in the society and universities in Iran, problems stemming from the women's dual roles (conflict between family and work), false beliefs and attitudes of the society, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem amongst the women, absence of equal educational opportunities, women employment and legal issues and the absence of an appropriate work solution in the universities [8]. Mooghali *et al.* in a study reported that the indices obtained for the promotion of the women to managerial positions in Ministry of Healthcare, Treatment and Medical Education in Iran are in a very low level, below average [13]. In the study by Bordbar *et al.*, the culture governing the organization, the incorrect structures existent in the organization and social factors are the most important hindrances to the promotion of the female faculty members to the managerial positions in Yazd's Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences [11]. The study by Hashemi *et al.*, titled "the investigation of gender impediments in acquisition of occupational and managerial positions from the perspective of the staff and professors of Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch, demonstrated that interest and self-confidence and effort, individual characteristics, gender attitudes towards managerial positions, some rules and regulations as well as experience and education are barriers to the occupying of the managerial positions [14]. Mau *et al.* reported in a study that there is a significant relationship between such barriers as familial responsibilities, cultural issues and tendency and interest of the female faculty members with the occupying of the managerial positions in universities but no significant relationship was documented between economic barriers, higher academic ranks, age and the female faculty members' managerial potency with the attainment of the higher management levels as found out in an investigation of the female managers of Tehran University [10]. In the study by Sarfaraz *et al.*, 15 high-ranking managers from Tehran University were subjected to deep interview method as a result of which the gender-based sociability, social beliefs and opinions, men's group-orientation, familial responsibilities, structural problems, legal system, mindset and men's attitudes towards women's capabilities and their lack of preparedness for the transferring of power to the women were mentioned as the most substantial barriers to the female managers' upgradation [15]. Mirghafoori in a study reported cultural and social factors as the most substantial barriers to the promotion of female managers to the higher managerial positions in the provincial state organizations [16]. Goudarzvand *et al.* carried out a research called "the effect of organizational culture on the absorption of the women to the managerial positions" and the results signified that the guiding beliefs and daily beliefs play an important role in the absorption of the women to the managerial positions in Gilan Province's level of governmental organizations [17]. The results of the study by Nasiri Velik Bani *et al.* that was undertaken aiming at the investigation of

the role of glass ceiling on the reduction of perceived organizational justice in Orumia University showed that there is positive and significant relationship between the existence of the glass ceiling and the reduction of the perceived organizational justice and its aspects (distributive justice, procedural justice and interactive justice) [18]. The study by Mortazavi *et al.*, named "the academic progress of the female faculty members in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, indicated that the rank upgradation status of the female faculty members in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences has been better in comparison to that of their male counterparts and even their female counterparts in some of the universities in the developed western universities. Of course, the study points to the existence of a sort of glass ceiling for the female faculty members' promotion [19].

According to the fact that girls account for a high percentage of the medical sciences university students in Iran and there is considered a particular position for the presence of the women in various areas of the country in the high-level documents, especially in the law on Islamic Republic of Iran's sixth development plan and, also, in regard of the idea that the female faculty members feature higher education and competencies, it is suggested that the senior managers of the universities should rethink about their criteria and scales of faculty members' promotion so that the female faculty members could be used of their scientific and intellectual capacities in the executive domain. Based thereon, the universities should perform upgradation of the faculty members to managerial positions without having gender interfered in doing so and with consideration of the scientific and intellectual capabilities of the faculty members and also through paying attention to the legal capacities of the high level documents and based on the qualifications and verification conditions. On the other hand, the discussions on culture-building regarding the issue of women's management in various sectors of the society are of particular importance and the cultural affairs' proctors, for instance State Radio and Television, collective communication media, textbooks, social networks and others should, meanwhile introducing the successful female managers, change the current attitudes of the society towards women's management.

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