

Gender Equality within HR Practices in Higher Education Institutions – The Case of the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK)

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Abstract

Human Resource Management (HRM) may be considered as a tool to improve gender equality by citing equal opportunities as a key of Personnel policy focusing on developing people, valuing diversity, and enabling the promotion of equality to be linked to the achievement of organizational goals (Linda, 1998). The recruitment and selection process could be affected by several factors leading to inequality between men and women for occupying top managerial positions, such as the societal factors including gender role stereotype and the organizational factor including the male dominated organization and discriminatory organizational culture.

This paper will focus on gender equality in recruitment and selection process mainly in the scope of top managerial opportunities based on the case study of USEK that benchmarks international best practices and that aims to be considered as the leader institution in Lebanon and region for enhancing the empowerment of women and improving women's career advancement. It will study to what extent gender role stereotype and organizational culture, policies and practices affect Women's career advancement for top managerial positions in Lebanese Higher Education Institutions. Through primary and secondary collected through surveys and interviews, the paper will demonstrate: first, if the recruitment and selection process for top managerial positions could be affected in advance by gender bias and organizational culture; second, if the existence of gender equality policy in the workplace could be an efficient solution to avoid gender discrimination and prejudgment within all HR practices.

Literature review

Women in management are still experiencing difficulties in reaching managerial positions (Ely & Padavic, 2007). They are facing different barriers to their career advancement in management and especially to access top management positions. Those barriers are divided into three types; the social, the organizational and the individual factors.

Women worldwide, in the Middle East and in Lebanon are mainly facing two types of barriers that affect their career advancement and progression; the societal-cultural through the stereotypes of gender roles and organizational barriers through the organizational culture and practices.

Societal-cultural Factors: These factors are mainly based on the individual perception of people about women in management and the Masculine Organizational Culture.

- 1) One of the social factors is the individual perception of people about women in management based on the stereotyping theory that presents and identifies the mechanisms and source of gender discrimination in management. As per the stereotyping theory, women’s development into managerial positions is interrupted and limited by the obvious discrimination between women’s characteristics and men’s characteristics that are usually and traditionally interrelated to managerial success (Terbog & Ilgen, 1975; Baroudi & Truman, 1992).
 - **Gender Stereotypes** have been defined by Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) as “the characteristics, attitudes, values and behaviors that society specifies as appropriate for the particular gender”. According to Schein (2007), Eagly & Carli (2007), and Eagly & Koenig (2008), the worldwide major obstacle for women’s development in management to achieve top managerial positions is the gender role stereotypes that can also affect many workplace decisions such as recruitment, selection, hiring, promotion, job advancement opportunities and ending with retention.

Gender Stereotypes	Women	Men
Personality traits	Women are often expected to be passive and submissive	Men are usually expected to be self-confident and aggressive
Domestic Behaviors	Caring for children is often considered best done by women	Household repairs are often considered best done by men
Occupations	Until very recently most nurses and secretaries were usually women	Most doctors and constructions workers were usually men
Physical Appearance	Women are expected to be small and graceful	Men are expected to be tall and board-shouldered

Table 1: Gender Stereotypes Characteristics for Women and Men
 Source: This table is taken from the studies of Bono & Duehr (2006) and Vinnicombe & Singh (2002)

Role Congruity Theory is an extension of Eagly’s Social Role Theory:

Role Congruity Theory	Social Role Theory
<p>The focus of Role Congruity Theory is social roles that have prescriptive and descriptive stereotypes considered as key feature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Descriptive stereotypes indicate what a job or person is like. ➤ Prescriptive stereotypes indicate what a job or person should be like. 	<p>States that men and women behave differently as well as work related choices due to the social expectations of what roles men and women should occupy.</p>

Table 2: Role Congruity and Social Role Theories
 Source: This table is taken from the study of Eagly (1987)

Gender Role Congruity (GRC) has been defined by Burn (1995) as “sets of norms that communicate what is generally appropriate for each sex”. All Men and Women have

Gender Roles that put them under pressures to conform to social or organizational gender roles (Burn, 1995).

Social Gender Role	Organizational Gender Role
<p>Due to GRC, men and women should try to match between the roles that are available to them in their society and the acquiring role-related skills (Eagly et al, 2000b):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Females: Domestic skills (cooking) Female Gender Role (homemaker) ➤ Males: Marketable skills (paid economy) Male Gender Role (Income provider) 	<p>Due to GRC, individuals in organizations form a specific mental prototypes or images of the ideal candidate for the organization role and which may involve traits that are stereotypic of one gender only and perhaps being male (Cleveland et al, 2000 and Powell & Gaves, 2003); The prototype of a specific work requiring aggressive actions and physically demanding tasks will likely be masculine.</p>

Table 3: Social and Organizational Gender Roles

Source: This table is taken from the studies of Eagly (2000b), Cleveland (2000) and Powell& Gaves (2003)

- **Gender discrimination:** According to Dipboye and Colella (2005), **discrimination** is observed as a process of differentiation between persons based on characteristics that are unacceptable or inapplicable to the activity for which the differentiation is made. This way of discrimination is the **Gender Discrimination** known as **Gender Bias, Sexism, and Sex Discrimination**. Gender Discrimination is a differentiation among persons in the processes of selection, compensation, promotion, professional training and recognition of professional merits is based on subjective criteria “the gender”.
The Glass Ceiling (The underrepresentation of women in management):
As per Bell, McLaughlin and Sequeira (2002), *the glass ceiling* is another form of gender discrimination that bounds women to access top managerial positions providing them with powerful status within the organization. The concept of glass ceiling is the first form of gender discrimination in the field of management and it is defined as “the phenomena of social and organizational biased attitudes that create artificial barriers- social, internal structure and government barriers- preventing women from reaching top managerial positions”. Women do not achieve the highest positions in management due to discriminatory practices within organizations and societies and due to national or organizational culture. In addition, women’s access to top managerial positions is barred from their first day of employment because they are not integrated in strategic departments and they are also excluded from the formal and informal networks which can provide them the necessary social capital for their career evolution into top positions (Wirth, 2001).
- **Gender Equality:** In most of the countries, it was recognized that the existence of equal rights between men and women is very essential since traditional gender roles lead to discrimination between both genders. For this reason, many countries have produced regulations to increase equality and programs to offer women the accessibility to health, education, and economic rights. However, the fact remains the

opposite since it is noticed that women are still benefiting from less opportunities and benefits than men and they are still having a lower participation in the work force.

The Feminist Theory:

Feminist theory is one of the most important theories of modern sociology that analyzes the status of women and men in society with the aim of improving women's lives to the best, giving a voice to women and highlighting on the importance of women's contribution in the society.

- 2) Another social factor is the concept of Masculine Organizational Culture which is about the norms and attitudes of the organizational culture eliminating women from powerful positions, resources and vacancies within the organization and maintaining unequal power relations among men and women (Connell 2006). Women working in male dominated organizations are less powerful and work under pressure to conform the masculine norms set by the majorities (Guy, 1993) because men underestimate the abilities of women managers and exclude them from being members of top managerial positions by showing their male prejudice (Guy, 2003 & Connell, 2006). Therefore, the policy of each organization is considered as a key factor that supports many affirmative actions' empowering women and increasing their representation in top managerial positions (Kelly and Newman, 2001).

Organizational Factors: HRM Policies and Practices

The **organizational factors** that affect women's potential to achieve the highest managerial positions within an organization are the **organizational culture** such as its structure and networks and the **organizational practices** including managerial selection and recruitment, promotion procedures, performance evaluation as well as training and development.

Therefore, this part will cover the most important information regarding the national and organizational culture in order to be able in later stages to understand more what are the organizational factors affecting the R&S process for Top Managerial positions and to what extent they can do so.

As per the studies of Geert Hofstede in 1980, 1998, and 1991, **the definition of culture** is "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others" and **the elements of national culture** are the values and attitudes, education, social organization, technology, politics, law, language, and religion.

As for the **national culture**, it has also **six different dimensions** the power distance index, the individualism vs collectivism, the masculinity vs femininity, the uncertainty avoidance index, the long term orientation vs short term normative orientation and the indulgence vs restraints.

As per Schein (1985), the **organizational culture definition** is "A pattern of shared basic assumptions – invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems".

The **organizational culture** has **different types** divided into Clan, adhocracy, hierarchy and market.

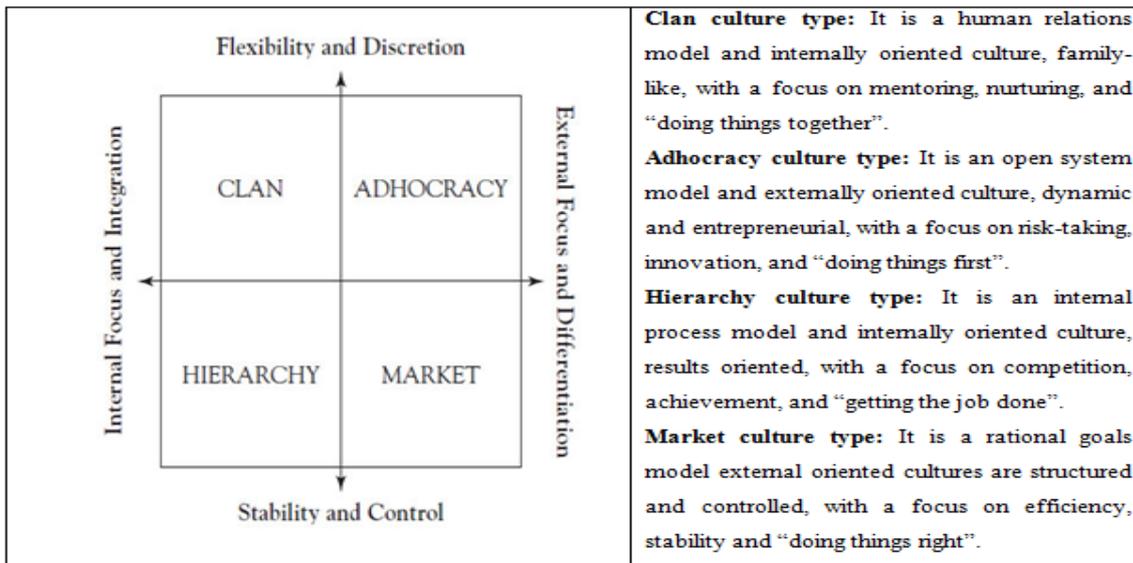


Figure 1: Four Types of Organizational Culture

Source: This figure is taken from the study of Quinn and Cameron (1999)

Several studies have proved that negative attitudes and sex-typed stereotypes toward women at workplace are still affecting the career advancement of women in management through discriminatory organizational practices that include managerial recruitment & selection processes (R&S), training & development opportunities, performance evaluation procedures, and promotions:

- Hutchings and Weir (2006): highlighted on the selection process in the Arab world which is highly subjective and based on personal contacts, nepotism, and family name.
- Al-Lamki’s (1999): found that in the Arab world and especially in Oman men bosses have discriminatory selection and promotion practices due to their traditional attitudes towards working women.

The R&S process which is the main HRM activity, is considered as “a process through which organizations try to match the individual to the needs of the given job” (Bach, 2005) and it can only be meaningful if applicants are given equal opportunity and if the equal opportunity laws are taken into consideration.

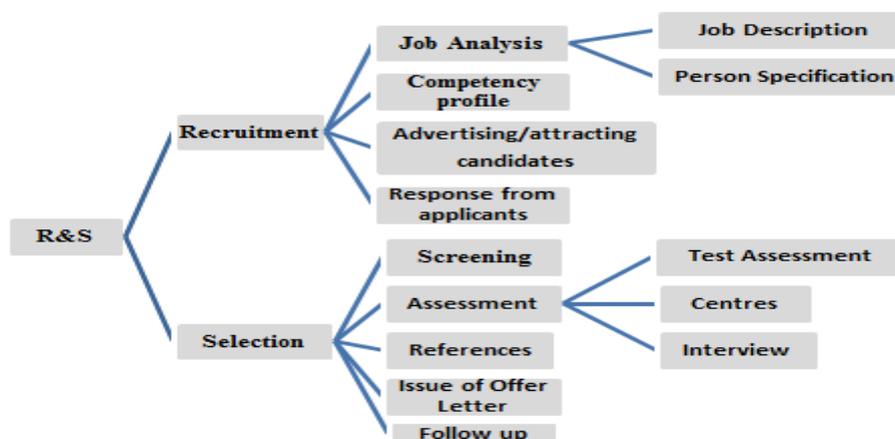


Figure 2: R&S Process

Source: This figure is taken from the study of Nde, Martin Nche (1995)

Recruitment: Recruitment has been defined as “the process of attracting individuals in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications and encouraging them to apply for jobs within the organization” (Illesanmi, 1997). It offers managers a large group of candidates in order to be able to select the employees they need (Stonner, Freeman and Gilbert, 2000). There are two types of recruitment sources, the internal that includes job posting on public boards (Ejiofor, 1989), and the external recruitments that is based on advertising in mass media-newspapers, radio, television, trade magazines and journals, sender recruiters to colleges and universities, employment agencies and head hunting in conferences and seminars (Ejiofor, 1989). The organization decision of choosing an internal or external source is affected by many factors such as the factor of needing a specific category of staff or the factor of encouraging employees to develop more themselves and to be more motivated. Then, the methods of recruitments will depend on the source of recruitment chosen by the organization (Flippo, 1984).

The recruitment process, which is the first process for filling job opportunities, consists of different steps (Hannagan, 1995):

1. Examination of job opportunities requirements “Job Analysis”: job description and person specifications and competences)
2. Consideration of suitable candidates sources
3. Drafting job advertisements and selecting the most suitable media to carry them
4. Assessing the appropriate salary levels for all employees
5. Arranging interviews and aspects of selection

Selection: As per Stonner, Freeman and Gilbert (2000), the selection process has been defined as “the mutual process whereby the organization decides whether or not to make a job offer and the candidate decides whether or not to accept it”. The selection process involves a process of matching job requirements and candidate attributes through drafting a “person specification” in which the background, education, training, personality and other characteristics of the ideal candidates are defined. The person described in that job specification might not exist but at least the process of drafting a person specification will create a standard for the comparison of candidates (Boertist and Mojboom, 1989). The selection process is also seen by Nwachukwu (1992) as “a systematic effort to identify the most suitable candidates to fill an identified vacancy”. There are different selection procedures since no standards procedure can be adopted by all firms, the initial or preliminary interview, the application blank, the references, the psychological Tests and the interviewing. Following to the procedure, there are two other steps that will be followed; the supervisor approval for the candidates who have successfully completed all steps in order to be able to do the third interview and finally the physical examination which is an employment step in most businesses.

Methodology and measurement

The aim of this research is to empirically determine the advancement of women in management and especially in the Lebanese Higher Education Institution. The research used primary and secondary data from the academic staff (sample) of USEK University (population). Data was only collected from USEK academic staff and especially from the 202

full-time instructors (144 Men and 58 Women) who are working in various faculties and departments in all USEK regional centers-Kaslik, Chekka, Zahle and Rmeich-.

As for the sources of data, all information for this study was primary and secondary collected:

- Primary Data: was collected through the use of structured questionnaires with close-ended questions and 5 points Likert scale that measure the attributes of each independent variable.
- Secondary Data: was collected through books, internet search, articles, journals and the use of well-organized and structured face to face interviews with one female dean and another face to face interview with the Pro-rector for Quality Assurance and Teaching & Learning at USEK and who is at the same time member of the University Council.
- Data Analysis: The significance of correlations between the three independent variables and the dependent variable is verified with the help of “cognitive mapping” test for the qualitative method used “face to face structured interviews” and with the help of Software Package for Statistics and Simulation (SPSS) by using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test for the quantitative method used “questionnaire”

Three **hypotheses** are considered as a result of the research question “To what extent gender role stereotype and organizational culture, policies and practices affect Women’s career advancement for top managerial positions in Lebanese Higher Education Institutions?”

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant correlation between Gender role stereotypes and women’s career advancement in management.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant correlation between organizational culture and women’s career advancement in management.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant correlation between organizational policies & practices and women’s career advancement in management.

The conceptual framework is composed of the independent variables and one dependent variable.

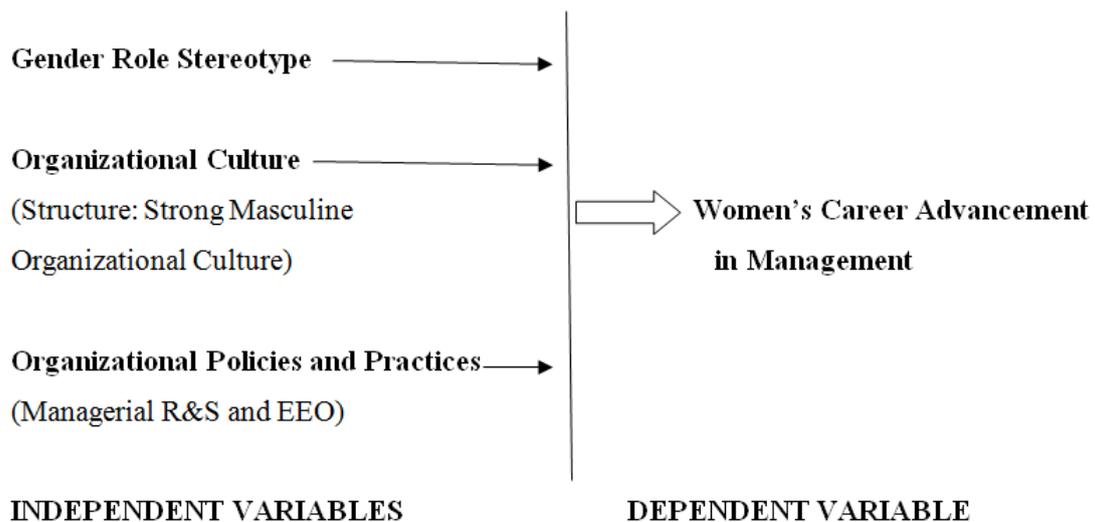


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework

Type Variable	Variable	Indicators (Attributes/Factors)	Measure
Dependent	Women's career advancement in management	Number of women at the various management levels	Ratio of women to men at the various levels of management
Independent	Gender Role Stereotype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality traits • Domestic behaviors • Occupations • Physical appearance • Individual perception of people about women in management 	Extent to which gender role stereotype affect women's career advancement at the various management levels in the organization
Independent	Strong Masculine Organizational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norms • Attitudes • Beliefs • Assumptions • Structure 	Extent to which strong masculine organizational culture affect women's career advancement at the various management levels in the organization
Independent	Organizational Policies and Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial R&S process • Managerial R&S criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Intelligence, professionalism, skills and Experience ➢ Chance/luck • EEO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Laws ➢ Internal rules and regulations 	Extent to which organizational policies and practices affect women's career advancement at the various management levels in the organization

Table 4: variables' types and attributes

Dependent Variable: Based on statistics provided by the Teaching Personnel Office, the number of women occupying top positions at USEK on 2010 and 2015 was determined. Then the measurement of the career evolution and advancement in management of Females' Full-time instructors during their employment years at USEK is done.

	Women			Men		
	2010	2015	2010 vs. 2015	2010	2015	2010 vs. 2015
Full-time faculty members	28%	29%	+1%	72%	71%	-1%
Members of University Council	5%	17%	+12%	95%	83%	-12%
Deans	7%	13%	+6%	93%	87%	-6%
Associate deans	23%	38%	+15%	77%	62%	-15%

Independent Variables: In order to measure gender role stereotype, organizational culture as being strong masculine organizational culture as well as organizational policies and practices highlighting on the recruitment and selection practice and Equal Employment Policy and their effect on women's career advancement in management in Lebanese Higher Education Institutions, a survey questionnaire was designed and sent to all females' full-time instructors at USEK University.

The questionnaire contained both nominal (age & years of seniority) and ordinal questions that are divided into four sections as follow:

- Section 1: Personal Data
- Section 2: Gender Role Stereotype and gender discrimination
- Section 3: Organizational Culture
- Section 4: Organizational Policies and Practices

In addition to the questionnaire filled by all females' full-time instructors at USEK University, two structured face to face interviews were prepared in order to find:

- What are the barriers that women are facing in their career advancement in management,
- What are the factors that are affecting the number of women in the various top managerial positions in the academic field,
- What are the main factors that are affecting women's recruitment & selection as full-time instructors at USEK,
- And the factors that are also affecting their managerial promotion opportunities.

Result & Discussion: A principal factor analysis was conducted on the 15 Items with oblique rotation (direct oblimin). The KMO test produces the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the value of KMO should be greater than 0.5 if the sample is adequate. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = 0.631 which is well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Field, 2013). The eigenvalues associated with each linear component (factor) represent the variance explained by that particular linear component. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. Three Factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 42.139 % of the variance. The table below shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same factor suggest that factor 1 represents Organizational Culture, factor 2 represents Organizational Policies and Practices and factor 3 represents Gender Role Stereotype.

	Questions	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha
Factor 1: Organizational culture	Q8: Your organizational policies, principles, opinions and views underestimate the abilities of women to be managers and ignore the importance of equality between the two genders.	0.805	0.740
	Q9: Your organization has a higher expectation regarding the productivity and the efficiency of men's performance than women's performance since its traditions are more men-oriented	0.663	
	Q7: Your organization is maintaining an unequal power relation between men & women and it eliminates women from powerful positions, resources and vacancies within the organization.	0.546	

Factor 2: Organizational policies and practice	Q15: Your organizational policies are considered as a key factor of supporting actions that active women's empowerment and representation in top managerial positions.	0.940	0.687
	Q14: International and national laws were able to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination toward women especially at the workplace.	0.593	
Factor 3: Organizational attributes	Q13: Women in your organization may be recruited and selected to occupy top managerial positions based on chance and luck.	0.734	0.768
	Q4: All women should have a specific physical appearance such as being small and graceful because of their gender type.	0.423	

Table 5: Accepted Questions and Correlation Coefficients of each Factor

The above questions are related to the accepted attributes having significant values greater than 0.05 and -0.05.

The internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire is measured for each factor (series of question involving a Likert scale) to verify the **participants' consistent and reliable answers**. The latter is a **strong indication of unidimensionality for the variables**. This can be achieved by estimating **Cronbach's Alpha** which all **score near or above 0.7 are indication of internal consistency**.

Hypothesis 2: can be verified and confirmed by looking at the factor loadings (values normalized between -1 and 1 whereby positive values indicate positively correlated factors and negative values indicate negatively correlated factors). A visual inspection of the above table shows all loadings on items Q8, Q9 and Q7 for **factor 1 (Organizational culture)** are positive. The latter is an indication of positive correlation between Organizational culture and Women career advancement since the majority of organizational culture attributes have positive loadings.

Hypothesis 3 and 1: were verified and confirmed by using the above scheme. **Factor 2 (Organizational policies and practice)** and **Factor 3 (Gender role stereotype)** were found in positive correlation with Women career advancement based on items Q15 and Q14 for Factor 2 and Q13 and Q4 for Factor 3.

Secondary Data Analysis:

The main points discussed during **the first face to face interview** with **Dr. Georges Yahchouchi** are:

- Specific Reasons for Discriminatory Managerial Recruitment and Selection Process.
- Specific Reasons for Unequal Promotion Opportunities.
- Common Factors Affecting Women's Recruitment & Selection and Managerial Promotion Opportunities.

- Gender Equality in Recruitment, Selection and Promotion AND USEK Application.
- Benefits of Women's Presence.
- Organizational Policies and Quotas.

He revealed that there are some specific factors leading to discriminatory R&S process and unequal promotion opportunities and at the same time there are some other common factors affecting both the R&S and promotion processes. The presence of women at workplace is a must because they can bring a lot of benefits to the organization. And in order to reach gender equality, there are some conditions to be respected order than imposing policies and quotas that might lead sometimes to inequality matter for qualified people. **As for USEK, the equality among both genders exists and there are no discriminatory practices which mean that having equal employment policies is not necessary.**

The main points stated during **the second face to face interview** with **Dr. Lara Hanna Wakim** are:

- General Barriers for Women's Career Advancement.
- Specific Barriers and Solutions for Women's Succession in Top Managerial Positions.
- Specific Barriers and Solutions for Equal Managerial Promotion Opportunities.
- Needed Qualifications and Requirements for Successful Managers.

She revealed that there are different barriers that affect in general the career advancement of women and other specific barriers affecting the succession of women in top position and the equal promotion opportunities among both genders. But there are some suggestions that might be considered as solutions for those barriers and some other qualifications and requirements needed for both genders in order to be successful managers. **As for USEK, the barriers affecting the low percentages of women in top positions are not related to gender issue or organizational culture, policies and practices; it is related to personal factors and especially the high commitment of women to their family responsibilities.**

Discussion: In order to carefully analysis the data collected and to clearly answer the research question, a series of questions were prepared on the topic and surveyed to 58 females' full-time faculty members at USEK where only 50 of them answered and two different interviews were organized with two persons who are currently occupying top positions at USEK.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative methods already used, it is noticed that the three independent variables have a positive significant correlation with the dependent variable since the majority of attributes related to each independent variable have a positive loadings which means a positive correlation with the dependent variable.

This means that the career advancement of women in management at USEK is affected positively in some points by gender role stereotype, organizational culture, organizational policies & practices highlighting on HRM policies & practices and specifically the ones related to managerial recruitment, selection and promotion.

In addition, it was noticed based on the interviews the existence of other independent variable that affects negatively the career advancement of women and which is the personal factor mainly represented by the attribute of "family responsibilities' commitment" that should be studied and proved in other study.

Finally, we can conclude that the literature review part and the result of the empirical study match and prove each other in the area where our study is done (USEK case) but with a positive relationship between the three independent variables (gender stereotype, organizational culture and organizational policies & practices) and the dependent variable (women's career advancement in management).

CONCLUSION

Women can provide different perspectives, knowledge and perceptions to top managerial positions within an organization but they have been recently under-utilized as a pool of talent (Claude Francoeur, Re´al Labelle and Bernard Sinclair-Desgagne; 2007).

This is why gender equality is currently considered as one of the particularly issues that become a competitive advantage and a source of corporate added value and nowadays most of the companies are aiming to increase their competitiveness through implementing measures that improve the proportion of women on their top managerial positions.

As per Dr. Yahchouchi "capable and qualified women managers will enhance the quality of debate and communication, the value of respect and careful listening, and the capacity of selection within an organization".

Therefore Dr. Yahchouchi suggested some **recommendations** for USEK in order to increase more the percentage of qualified women managers such as:

- Imposing quotas only for qualified and capable women,
- Increasing the number of trainings, conferences and post-graduate programs,
- Providing more benefits, facilities and flexibility for working mothers,
- Continuing the adaptation of its process, rules and regulations where gender equality is provided,
- Sharing the experience of equality with other private and public universities,
- Taking the lead to be one of the first leader institutions in Lebanon and region for enhancing the empowerment of women and improving women's career advancement.

For the most parts, this study was restricted by three main **limitations** which are:

1. The type and the structure of the organization,
2. The time restriction,
3. The small sample size of 58 females' full-time instructors.

Finally and based on this study with all the constraints that were faced, a positive **perspective about the future** advancement of women in management was built since the percentages of women in different top positions is increasing with time, the level of women having high level of education is also increasing and finally the importance of having women in managerial positions is being promoted more and more with time.

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