

## Jordanian Women in Leadership Positions in the Public Sector: Cultural Barriers to Their Success

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**Abstract:** It is widely accepted that women can make an important contribution to the development and strengthening of society. Acceptance of women in leadership roles is a valuable step in a society's developmental process. This study used a questionnaire survey to collect data from female employees in the public sector in Jordan to identify the obstacles and difficulties faced by Jordanian working women in reaching top management and to look at the issue of discrimination among male top management against women occupying leadership positions. This result indicates that Jordanian women have a low presence in leadership and decision-making positions because of the existence of discrimination. If the marginalization of women continues their participation in and contribution to the development of the country will be negatively affected. In addition, Jordan patriarchal systems continue to obstruct women's career moves. If such systems are not dismantled, inequality between men and women will continue to exist, making it difficult for women to ascend to leadership positions.

**Key words:** Leadership, cultural obstacles, leadership training, management behaviour, discrimination

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### INTRODUCTION

In management, the success and efficiency of leaders depends on the capabilities they possess in terms of personal characteristics, educational qualifications, professional expertise, knowledge and experience. These attributes make a person eligible and confident to make decisions and help him/her to face challenging situations on an ongoing basis. A person who controls the decision-making process needs both the above capabilities as well as the desire to lead. They also need to have a range of social abilities in order to balance their research responsibilities and social demands in relation to family life, social mores and economic conditions. In Jordan and elsewhere in the Middle East, the improvement in the role of women as leaders in organizations and their increasing contribution to development stems from the firm belief that improving the situation of Arab women to work is a key pillar in supporting the wider development of the community and can lead to fundamental social and developmental improvements (Shiahbi, 2002).

The value of women's leadership has been increasing continuously over the last 20 year as they have become

colleagues with men in managing companies and organizations in both the private and public sector. This partnership with their male counterparts has created plentiful job vacancies for highly trained women in Jordan. However, there exists a gap between a women's performance in her career and her share in decision-making, especially in top management positions (Shiahbi *et al.*, 2003).

In any country the major aim of development is to improve the circumstances of the individual and this can be achieved by ensuring that all members of society share in the rewards that development brings. Therefore, it is crucial to let women take a full and active part in the improvement process, to show the real method out, that is to get accomplishment in the highly developed societies where the merit, unrestricted markets and the giant companies will determine the dominance (Asskar, 2003).

Although, the extent of Arab women's economic activities is growing their participation in the workforce is still the lowest in the world. In the Arabic region women account for just 29% of the total labour market whereas a rate of 39% is seen in similar countries in terms of income.

In the Middle East, the participation of women is highest in North African Arabic countries like Morocco and Tunisia and it is lowest in Jordan.

In 2003, the Jordanian human resources indicated that the percentage of female students in higher education stood at 50.4% while it was 49.4% for all levels of education (HRI, 2003). The percentage of illiteracy among girls/women aged >15 year old was 15.2%. The percentage of women participating in real economic activity was 6.7% while the percentage of women who were unemployed was 19.3%. Of the women in employment, 44.8% were employed in the civil service.

According to statistics released by the Civil Services Bureau (CSB, 2004) and the Jordan National Commission for Women regarding ministerial positions in Jordan, the first female minister was appointed in 1993 and she took up a role in the Ministry of Industry and Trading. Later, in 1996, the first woman was assigned to the judiciary. As regards women in other high-level positions such as CEO, the estimated percentage was just 1% in municipal and rural councils in 2010. In general, female participation at the highest level in the civil service was 3.18%, while at the first level it was 11%; in managerial positions it was 7.5% and in administrative jobs it was 11.6%.

Governmental support for Jordanian working women can be seen in the gradual increment in the percentage of women in various occupations. For example, in general, the percentage jumped to 46.4% in the private sector in 2006 and to 48% in the public sector. In the case of the diplomatic core, there was a significant increase from 2.3% in 1990-16.5% in 2006. Currently, the percentage of women in the Senate (upper house of the Jordanian parliament) is 12.1 whereas it was just 2.3% in 1990 while in the house of representatives (lower house of parliament) it is now 5.8% whereas it was zero in 1990. There has also been some increase in the private sector because the percentage of women who are running their own business increased from 6.8% in 2000-10% in 2005. All of the above-mentioned data is derived from figures published by the Jordanian Statistics Department in 2008 (DS, 2004, 2008, 2009).

Given the increasing participation of women in the public and private sector, this study aims to identify the factors that have a significant effect on the participation of women in leadership roles in Jordan. There is no doubt that female participation in community affairs has increased in recent years in the country but it is still below the desired level in both the public and private sector. Indeed, female participation in the workforce is still low worldwide. Moreover, a report by The United Nations (2000) indicates that women's participation in managerial positions barely reached 18% in advanced countries, 13% in Africa and 10% in Asia Pacific countries.

**Problem statement:** Leadership is a key element in management success. A leader's success can be measured by employee confidence and satisfaction. Leadership is different from any other life fields in other fields women proves to be a talent and can be better than men but in leadership the woman's effort and the achieved results has a gap. This gap indicates that there is inequity in terms of the position of women relative to men and this is particularly evident in large organizations (public or private).

With respect to the issue of fairness in the working environment, Nusseir states that it is obviously hard in Arabic countries (including Jordan) for a promoted woman to meet the requirements of her new higher position even if she is as qualified as a man. Moreover, due to the prevailing cultural perspective it is common to refuse to give a woman a leadership role in Arabic countries. Besides there is no support for working women in the laws and regulations governing their working environments.

Tripp (2003) compares the proportion of both men and women in positions of power and decision-making around the world and concludes that it is still very low. The contribution of women is <35% in most countries in terms of leadership, yet they are estimated to comprise more than half of the world's population (Cormick Higgins, 2005). However, it is largely accepted that it is necessary to consider diverse ideas and perspectives to achieve the effective running of national affairs and the attainment of organizational goals.

Ibraheem (2008) studied men's discrimination against women in Jordan by setting that high-level positions are occupied by men and this supports the continuity of their power. He also states that by default, a man in such a position perceives the working woman negatively. Furthermore, cultural mores ensure male superiority in society where men are perceived to have the ability to make decisions and to fill top management vacancies. Essentially, women are oppressed when high-level positions are occupied by men. Ibraheem (2008) also found that Jordanian working women experience real difficulties when seeking to occupy any managerial position which come from both the society and its culture. Also, workplace opportunities such as job training, promotion and improving are available for men more than for women.

According to Mtamn, women's participation in public life and positions of power and decision-making is not at the required level and equality between women and men in this area is still far from being achievable in the short term because to date women represent a small percentage of legislators and decision-makers in various bodies and institutions, public and private in Jordan. The country still

faces a challenge in relation to gender inequality and the dominance of men in decision-making. Gender inequality persists despite efforts to bridge the gap between men and women in all fields. Some national policies have been implemented, but traditional gender-role expectations continue to have an adverse impact on women's career mobility.

According to Al-Husaini, the role of women has been marginalized in municipal councils a lack of financial resources prevents their participation in popular events and meetings. Moreover, they have limited communication skills and leadership skills as well as a low competitive drive and low self-confidence.

The problem that this study attempts to address can be summarized as identifying the cultural factors that act as barriers to increase discrimination against women and prevent them from holding top management positions and leadership roles which in turn reduces their opportunities to occupy such positions. It seems that women are still marginalized and that their participation is below the desired level. The discrimination between women and men in the holding of top management positions reduces the chance for organizations and the wider community to benefit from the abilities of women as efficient and effective members of society who can contribute to creating and sustaining comprehensive development which is the main bedrock for greater prosperity and a flourishing society.

**Purpose of this research:** The purpose of this research is threefold to disclose the obstacles and the difficulties faced by Jordanian working women to study the discrimination between men and women in getting the needed facilities and opportunities and to investigate the influence of cultural factors on male top management behaviour (discrimination) towards female leaders.

This study seeks to address two general research questions. The first question is: To what extent does culture influence male top management in determining who takes on a leadership position in the public sector? The second question is: What are the moderation outcomes of training on the relationship between culture and discrimination against women by male top management? These two questions are converted into two hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between culture and male top management discrimination against female leaders in the public sector in Jordan
- H<sub>2</sub>: Leadership training has a moderating effect on the relationship between culture and male top management discrimination against female leaders in the public sector in Jordan

## **Literature review**

**Cultural obstacles:** Commonly, people link the concept of culture with the number of certificates and scientific degrees so that educated people are those who only hold certificates. Accordingly, we see that the concept of culture is clear and does not need an investigation or explanation. Therefore, those people mentioned above do not believe in the role of the educated individuals in the society. Consequently, educated people are classified according to social bases which appear vividly in conflicts through codes and speeches so that the educated individual seems lost in the vortex of the society. This happens as a result to the status of Arabs educated people who are wandering in the world of immigration and alienation. Thus, the educated individuals have to play the role of the warriors in the field and the society has to shoulder the responsibility of providing them with potentials to disseminate free intellect and to reach their voice to the world (Mahdeen, 2002).

The importance of culture is centralized because it supports human beings with knowledge and practical skills and it helps people stay alive physiologically and socially. Culture helps people control their surroundings and to get accustomed to them. There are many synonyms for the word culture such as civilization and civility.

It is worth mentioning that society defines the location of the new culture so it refuse to accept this culture and human beings are affected by many overlapping factors in a considerable degree of complexity. Thus, shifts in human behaviour result in social, political, economic and cultural changes.

Khaleq (2001) defines the culture of a society as follows: "The culture of the society is not a biological heritage but it is acquired and people inherit it from generation to another through the social institutes starting from the smallest unit in the society which is the family to the largest society."

A woman at work faces many impediments that have social characteristics, like traditions, habits, cultural heritages and social values that do not accept that a woman can be a leader or the head of group of men. In such circumstances, it is believed that men should occupy leadership positions instead of women. In addition to the spread of some social traditions that identify only men with holding positions of administrative leadership there is scepticism about women's capability to hold high leadership positions even if she has the capacity and competency to do so. Also, a woman tends to encounter problems with management because of those cultural inheritances such as managers not considering her nature

when giving instructions, not accepting her opinions and participation in discussions and not accepting any critiques she expresses about issues.

From the fields in relation with the social impediments are the following: The cultural inheritance and the social standards. The negative social view of working women is considered to be one of the basic impediments that make it difficult for women to take up leadership positions. Certain values, traditions and habits encourage women to undertake simple, routine research while leaving major research that entails some level of responsibility (leadership) to men as they are perceived to be more capable than women. They see that a woman's main research is running a house and that going to work should not contradict or get in the way of her responsibilities inside the house. Also, society research in such a way as to determine a woman's path and the type of research that is deemed to fit her nature which is essentially work that does not entail a lot of stress when performing it (Sullivan and Sheridan, 1999). This path evolves with the child, male or female, since birth and during their upbringing at home then while at school and consequently, she/he acts and behaves on this basis.

It has been argued that a man undertakes hard and complex work that fits his nature as a man while a woman does work that fits her simple nature, so she inclines towards specific types of research such as teaching and nursing despite the presence of the desire and the capability to succeed in other work and fields. Hence, there are masculine and feminine types of research and thus leadership which includes responsibility, needs masculine attributes that a woman lacks such as self-confidence, rigidity for from sympathy and mind judging (Borck, 1994). So, society still looks at women in the working environment as unequal to men. Women are also seen as an integrating element and not as an active or basic element in building a society.

The absence of facilities that can help a woman to have continuity at work and reduce her burdens is also an obstacle that faces women who seek work. Such facilities include childcare services. Women often perform more than one task; she may be a worker who contributes to an organization or company by performing her duties and she may also be a mother who has the responsibility to provide care for her children as well as maintain a household as the woman tends to have responsibility for running the house in general, especially as the role of the grandfather, grandmother and aunts in the family has reduced compared to past times. All this creates huge burdens for a woman and so she may become unable to continue to work for long periods and in many cases is forced to stop working altogether (Abadi, 2002).

There are also limited fields of work that are open to women. Often women concentrate on areas like nursing and education and secretarial roles. In this respect, society again plays a key role because social orientations limit the kinds of career that women can have and, moreover, the nature of female participation in terms of serving society does not allow women to choose a career freely (Halawani and Abtsam, 2002; Ganem, 1999).

Lastly, different types of mass media contribute to introducing and enhancing the traditional picture of women as following men and consuming cosmetics and perfumes. The media seems reluctant to introduce the images of successful female leaders in different fields. This in turn affects the attitudes of both men and women towards women at research and in leadership and thus produces the same traditional concepts regarding the role of both sexes (Ibraheem, 2008).

**Leadership training:** Training is no longer considered to be limited to the process of organizing traditional training courses and certification. It has become a strategic option in the matrix of investment in and development of human resources. The individual is no longer called a worker or an employee but a human resource. Worldwide, people are seen as the most important resource that the development process depends upon. Scientists in different specializations have rushed to glorify the status of man. People are referred to as human capital by economists and as human assets by accountants. Some businesses and organizations call human beings intelligent capital, creative capital or cognitive capital.

The issue is bigger than the process of patching current problems through holding traditional training courses but it become more complex so that, it requires scientific and objective treatment that comply with the requirement of the stage we prepare ourselves to engage in as the organizations which follow the total quality management requirements. This new approach depends on the human element and the need to develop it continuously. Therefore, the viewpoint form the individual manager to the leading manager and finally to the high value manager in terms of having impact on the environment elements that he/she deals with and the management process has changed to continuous development processes. It has also transformed from regular management to preventive management.

Organizations have to develop their objectives to meet the challenges of an unknown future so that they change from having clear and quantitative goals and stereotyped activities to have innovative, renewable and different goals. It is not possible for a country with a high

illiteracy rate and a low educational level to meet the challenge of adopting new learning approaches brought about by the emerging and growing global knowledge economy. The development of IT and communication infrastructure and continuous innovation are leading to the spread of a lot of distance learning and training opportunities not only for women but for all members of society so that they can keep working on developing their knowledge and potential. Through improving the chances for women in education and personal development, female participation will definitely increase and countries can then succeed by employing their capabilities. Innovative infrastructure development will help to change the image and the type of research that can be carried out, so that will enable women to work more easily even in their homes. This requires the process of developing the national accounting concepts to include non-regular work undertaken by women (Zaiyed, 2000).

According to Bani Odeh, women's training is defined as an activity to support women with experience and skills to become productive members of an organization and it is the fastest way to compensate for regress and to achieve progress and taking care of her reflects the real state inside the organizations and it helps in achieving the desired goals. Moreover, Greenberg (2010) explains that training is a process to improve the abilities and skills of people so that they can better perform their job. The author lists four major principles that should ensure the effectiveness of employee training: participation (where the participant gives a commitment and learns more quickly), repetition, transfer of training and feedback. These principles can be applied in leadership training to build self-confidence.

Unfortunately, there are several problems including training impediments that limit a woman's opportunity to occupy a leadership position, regardless of whether they live in a developing or developed country. Those impediments have a significant negative effect on women's performance at research. The two most important impediments are elucidated below.

First, a person in a leadership position must have several qualifications and a range of experience in order to succeed in a top management role, so if a woman does not have those qualifications and experiences this reduces her opportunity to occupy such a position (Shihabi, 2002; Shihabi *et al.*, 2003). One of the reasons why many working women lack the necessary qualifications is the social attitudes that are inherent in society which determine the types of capabilities that women can acquire (Ganem, 1999). In addition, there is a prevailing view that administrative competency resides only in men and a scepticism about women having the capabilities to reach a leadership position.

Second, there is less interest in training and developing leadership skills in women compared to men. Many reasons have been cited for this including the difficulty that a woman would encounter when travelling to participate in external training courses and the existence of sex discrimination and bias when nominating staff for training and sending them on overseas trips. There is a deficit in terms of organizational policies on women's training because there are no training programmes that are specifically oriented to the needs of working women which weakens women's capability of playing even a basic role in an organization and hence the chance of reaching a senior position at research becomes almost impossible (Barak and Lafi, 2005). Moreover, there is a lack of sufficient support for women at work from the management which is the result of the belief that the expense of training female members of staff is an additional expenditure that cannot be recouped because women cannot invest all their energy and capability into work due to pregnancy, giving birth and raising children and so on.

#### **Behaviour of male top management (discrimination):**

There has been some interest in attempting to explain the differences between women and men in terms of their administrative behaviour. Vecchio (2002) explains that the concepts of management and sex in terms of masculinity and femininity have developed similarly. In the past, the predominant view was that masculinity and femininity are contrasting poles. In the workplace setting, man represents one pole and concentrates on research tasks while woman represents the other pole and focuses on employees and their interrelationships. The concept of management has changed through the adoption of these two trends. The first one stresses the importance of the job while the other one focuses on the relationships among individuals and a leadership style can reflect these two trends at the same time. Consequently, the androgyny style of leadership was developed and the study's results related to this method were unclear (Vecchio, 2002; Eagly and Carli, 2003).

Kanter (1997) ascribes the difference between women and men in terms of leadership style to the predisposition of an organization to employ women in jobs that reflect their social role templates. Often, women's social roles in relation to the sources of power weaken women which in turn leads to a negative image of women who hold leadership positions.

According to Jawdat (2001), the administrative behaviour of a man can be defined as a man who exercises dynamic power that is authorized by two sources. The first source of power is the position he occupies and its

relationship to the role he exercises and his personal status and so this is a power he has due to his position. This power can be seen as formal power because it is authorized by the top powers. The second source of power is related to personal status and its influence is considered informal and it is not an entitlement. All men who hold management positions without exception have formal power but not all of them have the same level of charisma. Men who only have formal power and not the power of influence lose nearly half of their leadership power. Hence they should have both types because these two types are the most important sources of power for those who hold leadership positions specifically in the education domain.

The literature has indicated that social, economic and political structures provide men with power to dominate and oppress women (Dow, 2001; Tripp, 2003). According to Gosetti and Rusch (1995) who use feminist research to explore women's experiences, provide explicit information on sex discrimination and focus on the problems created by male-dominant culture, norms and beliefs. Several theories have been used to frame research across disciplines and they have been employed to address women's issues and identify the presence of patriarchy (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). In contrast, Marshall (1997) indicates that feminism may frame research on women in leadership positions in order to expand leadership theory in relation to power and politics for example with respect to state-imposed oppression of women in state-regulated systems. Feminism helps to uncover cultural and institutional forces and sources of oppression and reveals the value of women's subjective experiences (Marshall, 1997).

Some negative attitudes towards women exist and they remain strong in some areas but in some cases they have become less distinct, or they have been accepted as normal behaviours, or they exist behind the scenes and are hard to observe. Organizations are working to recruit the best and most well-qualified employees including women but different types of obstacles including prejudices and the glass ceiling phenomenon are making it difficult for organizations to achieve this goal and this is preventing women from reaching top management positions (Pawell and Graves, 2003)

One typical definition of workplace discrimination is that workers from different groups are treated differently based solely on their group membership rather than on their productivity (Becker, 1957). According to the researcher, discrimination is due to taste-based preferences against certain groups such as women, minorities, etc. However, the author's discrimination theory fails to explain permanent discrimination against a given minority group for instance women.

Connell (1987) defines hegemonic masculinity of institutions as aggressive, goal oriented, competitive and efficient instead of supportive, kind and caring. Interestingly, women employees describe the working environment where they experience sex discrimination to be seemingly nice, supportive and protective. Hegemonic masculinity, according to the women, operates under the guise of being supportive, kind and caring. Many organizational practices that appear to build teamwork or informal networking, in fact subtly undermine women.

Gender roles and traditional attitudes have had a negative impact on women's advancement in both education and employment. Female managers in the Middle East encounter the glass ceiling more often and to a greater extent than their counterparts in other countries. Several factors have been found to play a role in forming a glass ceiling, including gender discrimination, lack of support and negative work relationships (Pai and Vaidya, 2009).

Thus it would seem that the oppression of women is part of the behaviour of male top management. It is also indicative of the under-representation of women in the workforce. It is important to relate the existence of women's oppression and marginalization. Feminism is a struggle that exists to end the oppression of women. It exists to benefit all women, regardless of group, class or race; it is not about privileging women over men but rather helping them to exercise a meaningful power that can be used to change people's lives.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study focused on the public sector. A sample of 361 respondents was interviewed using the research instrument. The sample consisted of female employees from 12 ministries from all the regions in Jordan.

A 5 point Likert scale was employed in the research instrument. The instrument covered three dimensions: cultural obstacles, leadership training for women and behaviour of male top management (discrimination). There were a total of 39 items for all dimensions. The hypotheses were tested by using two types of analysis. Pearson's correlation and multi-regression to determine the relationship, regression and differences between the factors. The results were used to determine whether the hypotheses could be accepted or rejected.

However, before proceeding to the analysis stage which used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analysis the survey questionnaire, the research instrument was tested for reliability by using the

Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The measure for all the variables (39 items) was equal to 0.907. A Cronbach's alpha value of  $>0.60$  denotes acceptable reliability, so the instrument and the data were judged to be reliable and suitable for further analysis. In addition, the PRESOR instrument was used on the subscales of the three factors investigated in this study and each factor scored as follows: 0.878 for cultural obstacles, 0.795 for leadership training and 0.884 for behaviour of male top management.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Pearson's correlation analysis:** A Pearson's correlation test was carried out to test hypothesis:

- $H_1$ : There is no relationship between culture and male top management discrimination against female leaders in the public sector in Jordan

The analysis of this hypothesis was used to determine whether cultural obstacles are correlated with women's success in leadership roles in the public sector. Table 1 shows the result of the analysis, from which it can be seen that there is a significant positive relationship between culture and male top management discrimination against female leaders in the public sector in Jordan. The correlation value between these variables of  $r = 0.559$  at a  $p$  level of 0.01 indicates that the relationship between the two variables is moderate. Therefore,  $H_1$  is rejected.

The results regarding this hypothesis indicate that there is a significant statistical relationship between culture and discrimination against women occupying top leadership positions in the public sector in Jordan; Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.559 at  $\alpha = 0.01$ . This result can be explained because there is a certain culture that governs society so there is discrimination to the advantage of men in occupying top leadership positions. As a result, this discrimination hinders women from holding such positions in the public sector in Jordan and this shows that there is a relationship between culture and discrimination.

The findings of the study indicate that the presence of Jordanian women in leadership and decision-making positions is low. This seems to be due to how women are socialized and because of stereotypical societal attitudes that create obstacles that hinder women's career advancement. If the marginalization of women continues their participation in and contribution to the development of the country will be negatively affected. In addition, the participants spoke about Jordan's patriarchal systems that continue to obstruct women's career moves. If such

Table 1: Pearson's correlation for  $H_1$

Variable	Discrimination	Culture
<b>Discrimination</b>		
Pearson's correlation	1	0.559**
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
N	355	355
<b>Culture</b>		
Pearson's correlation	0.559**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
N	355	355

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

systems are not dismantled, inequality between men and women will continue to exist, making it difficult for women to ascend to leadership positions.

The participants in this study suggested that there was a need to eliminate patriarchy and gender socialization which they believe are the sources of all inequality and male dominance in the country. This necessitates changing how girls are socialized in order to enable them to become the leaders of tomorrow. In addition, the promotion of discrimination awareness among both boys and girls is needed to improve equality and eliminate issues around gender socialization and workplace discrimination. Eliminating cultural norms and beliefs that disempower girls could improve their confidence and self-reliance which are personality traits that are necessary for every individual's development.

A critical factor in promoting women's access to leadership positions is the extent to which Jordanian people are ready to change their perceptions about women leaders. This can be achieved through provision of awareness campaigns/trainings for both men and women. There is a need for society to work collectively to eliminate cultural practices that encourage male domination and women's oppression. It is also important for social and political institutions to rid their environments of discriminatory practices that impede women's career advancement.

**Multi-regression analysis:** Multi-regression was performed in order to test hypothesis:

- $H_2$ : Leadership training has a mediating effect on the relationship between culture and male top management discrimination against female leaders in the public sector in Jordan

Table 2 presents a summary of the regression models from which it can be seen that the moderating variable (training) has an effect on the relationship between culture and male top management discrimination against female leaders in public sector organizations in Jordan.

An Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) investigation and quantification of the relationships between culture and training and discrimination following the stepwise method was carried

Table 2: Model summary

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	SE of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	0.559 <sup>a</sup>	0.312	0.310	0.49826	0.312	160.164	1	353	0.000
2	0.602 <sup>b</sup>	0.362	0.359	0.48041	0.050	27.724	1	352	0.000

<sup>a</sup>Predictors: (constant), culture; <sup>b</sup>Predictors: (constant), culture, training

Table 3: ANOVA test results

Model 1	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Regression	39.763	1	39.763	160.164	0.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	87.637	353	0.248		
Total	127.399	354			
2 Regression	46.161	2	23.081	100.007	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	81.238	352	0.231		
Total	127.399	354			

<sup>a</sup>Predictors: (constant), culture; <sup>b</sup>Predictors: (constant), culture, training; c. Dependent variable: discrim

Table 4: Model coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			Correlations		
	B	SE	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1 (Constant)	1.653	0.152		10.906	0.000			
Culture	0.527	0.042	0.559	12.656	0.000	0.559	0.559	0.559
2 (Constant)	0.810	0.217		3.740	0.000			
Culture	0.458	0.042	0.485	10.833	0.000	0.559	0.500	0.461
Training	0.287	0.054	0.236	5.265	0.000	0.387	0.270	0.224

<sup>a</sup>Dependent variable: discrim

out. As can be seen from Table 2, the one-predictor model where culture was the independent variable had an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.312, implying that culture alone explains about 31% of the variations in the discrimination scores between the cases. In addition, the model-predicted discrimination scores have a significant, medium-strength relationship with the respective measured scores (r = 0.559, p<0.01).

Moreover, the ANOVA test results (Table 3) confirmed that this model is significant (F = 160.1, df = 354, p<0.01). Incorporation of training into the model led to a 10% increase in the model's prediction capacity as well as an increase in the strength of the relation between the model-predicted and the measured discrimination scores where are increased from 0.559-0.602 (Table 1) and the new, two-predictor model is significant in itself (Table 1) and significant in its predictors as well (Table 2).

The model coefficients output (Table 4) helps in constructing the standardized as well as the unstandardized regression equations, in addition to identifying the importance of the different predictors in the model predictions. To construct the unstandardized regression equation, the b coefficients are used. Therefore, the equation is:

$$\text{Discrimination score} = 0.810 + 0.458 \times \text{culture score} + 0.287 \times \text{training score}$$

On the other hand, to establish the standardized regression equation, the standardized regression coefficients (i.e., Beta or β) are employed. Hence, the standardized regression equation is:

$$\text{Discrimination score} = 0.485 \times \text{culture score} + 0.236 \times \text{training score}$$

The partial correlation coefficients (Table 4) indicate a reduction in the strength of the relationship between the culture and discrimination score due to the inclusion of training in the model from 0.500-0.270 which means that leadership training serves as a mediator in this relationship by suppressing the discrimination score and therefore hypothesis H<sub>4</sub> is accepted.

The above results show that there is a positive relationship between the culture and discrimination variables and that leadership training for women has a positive effect on this relationship. In other words, training increases women's opportunities to hold top leadership positions in the Jordanian public sector.

As mentioned above, women have limited qualifications and administrative and functional experiences. For a person to be a successful leader they should have several qualifications and experiences, so when a woman does not have those qualifications and experiences it reduces her opportunity to be a leader in an organization. One of the reasons why women lack such qualifications is the social attitudes in society that



determine what sort of capabilities a woman can acquire. In addition there is a general consensus that only men have administrative competency and belief that women are not capable of undertaking a leadership role.

The findings of the study show that training has a positive effect in terms of reducing the negative male perception about women that is based on culture and that it can encourage women and girls to challenge cultural gender stereotypes. Further research on their experiences could provide an in-depth understanding of the barriers that may obstruct women's advancement to leadership roles. It could also provide useful information for the appropriate mentoring, training and empowering of women to enable them to reach top management positions.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of this study supported those reported in many previous studies on Jordan, namely that most leadership positions, whether economic or political, public or private, are occupied by men. Women's participation in community affairs in Jordan during the last few years has increased but it is still below the desired level in both the public and private sector. It is important that all institutions promote women's personality to provide awareness, discourage gender bias and promote diversity and acceptance of women in leadership roles. A critical factor in promoting women's access to leadership positions is the extent to which Jordanian people are ready to change their perceptions about women leaders and women's personality. Such a change would lead to the eventual elimination of male domination and women's oppression as well as the removal of discriminatory practices that impede women's career advancement. Such a change would also enable women to have greater self-confidence and men to trust in women's capability to make the decisions and to carry the responsibilities of leadership.

The result of the analysis showed that there is a significant positive relationship between culture and male top management discrimination against female leaders in the public sector in Jordan. The result also indicated that the mediator variable (training) has a significant positive effect on the relationship between culture and male top management discrimination against female leaders in the public sector in Jordan. The study also revealed that women are confronted by a number of obstacles that make it difficult for them to occupy leadership positions. The analysis of the data collected via the questionnaire provided an understanding of the motivations that the female respondents had in seeking leadership positions. This enables factors they employed to traverse public

sector to accomplish participation in decision-making and leadership occupation. The participants also shared strategies that had helped in their career success.

As previously mentioned, Jordan needs the perspectives and contributions of women to enhance the decision-making process in a variety of fields such politics, economics and business. In order to achieve equality between men and women, it is crucial to identify and remove obstacles such as gender-based stereotypes and negative perceptions that stand in the way of women's career paths. It is important that all organizations establish training programmes to provide awareness, discourage gender bias and promote diversity and acceptance of women in leadership positions. The participants in this study suggested that there is a need to eradicate patriarchy and discrimination which they believe are the source of all inequality and male dominance. This necessitates changing how girls are socialized in order to enable them to become the leaders of tomorrow. In addition, the promotion of discrimination awareness among both boys and girls is needed to improve equality and eliminate issues around gender socialization and workplace discrimination. Eliminating cultural norms and beliefs that disempower girls could improve their confidence and self-reliance which are personality traits are necessary for every individual's development.

This study recommends that mentoring, training and empowerment programmes should be provided in a variety of public and private sector organizations in order to increase the opportunities of women to occupy leadership positions. This would help to eliminate discrimination against female employees and put an end to the dominance of men. Jordanian women would benefit from such mentoring, training and empowerment programmes as it would enable them to gain more experience of women in leadership positions and change the negative perception towards them. It is also recommended that different forms of mass media could be utilized to change the predominant negative viewpoint of society towards working women. This would increase acceptance in society and lead to more opportunities for women to occupy leadership positions and to be involved in decision-making.

### LIMITATIONS

**Limitations and directions for future research:** This study supports and does expand our understanding of the influence of leadership on the presence of political perceptions. While this study makes a number of contributions, it also has a few limitations. First, the focus of the study was on women working in the public sector

only, so the participant's perceptions cannot be considered a true representation of the total population of Jordanian women, many of whom work in other sectors. Second, the study focused on a group of women from the Tswana culture, so its findings were based on that culture and may not be applicable to other cultures. Third, the research was conducted in a Jordanian context which possibly limits its generalizability to other settings. Lastly, the research was based on the participants' perceptions and therefore may reflect some bias.

In light of the above, one possible avenue for future research would be to carry out a similar study to identify the factors that increase discrimination against women and hinder them from occupying top leadership positions in the Jordanian private sector. Such a study would be a significant addition to the literature related to this issue especially studies conducted regarding the public sector. It might also be interesting to undertake a comparative study on two countries with different cultures.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study show that Jordanian women in leadership roles experience challenges originating from patriarchy, socialization and negative stereotypes. It is recommended that gender-sensitive training be provided for women and men in order to achieve equality among them, to foster respect for women in leadership positions and to eliminate the obstacles that prevent women's career advancement. As suggested by one of the respondents, all remedial processes should start by changing the traditional ways of bringing up children. The participants in this study were socialized outside of the norm with a less gender-focused and more positive upbringing. Girls need to be provided with opportunities to develop decision-making skills and leadership qualities at a young age. Society needs to be sensitized to the negative effects of gender socialization and encouraged to treat girls as equal to boys.

It is also recommended that different forms of mass media could be utilized to help change the predominant negative viewpoint of society towards working women. This would increase acceptance in society and lead to more opportunities for women to occupy leadership positions and to be involved in decision-making.

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