

# The Effects of Gender Inequality Barriers and Way Forward to Senior Management Positions: Perspectives on Saudi Women in Public Offices

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**Abstract:** The aim of this note is to investigate the reasons of women's underrepresentation in top management positions despite the rising rate of women's workplace participation and, then, identify the policies and procedures in place in Saudi Arabia to address the underrepresentation of women in management.

**Keywords:** Women's underrepresentation, management, women's workplace.

## BACKGROUND

Labor markets remain horizontally and vertically divided by gender due to the underrepresentation of women in the workplace, particularly in executive roles (Rahim, et al., 2018). In other words, women tend to lack equitable job access compared to men, and this is a worldwide and academic problem. Despite scientific evidence from earlier scholars indicating women's engagement in the labor market has risen, the notion persists that women are overrepresented in low-paying occupations as opposed to high-ranking ones. Regardless of their educational background and years of work experience, there seems to be an underrepresentation of women in senior management positions. In this case, previous researchers investigated the consequences of this stereotyped condition in order to comprehend its effects on women and boost their confidence in their abilities to hold top executive positions.

## AIM

This current research aims to

- a. Explore the causes of women's underrepresentation in top management positions despite the increasing rate of women's engagement in the workplace.
- b. Find the various policies and practices against the underrepresentation of women in management in Saudi Arabia

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For instance, gender inequality transcends the economic and social forces with which nations throughout the globe are currently battling (Wai Yee & Kwing-Chin, 2020). These authors recognized a variety of gender roles, including the underrepresentation of women in the workforce and their restricted opportunities to attain top positions in the workplace. They contended that this sort of status quo is responsible for the significant economic expenses incurred

by several nations. In this way, these researchers hypothesized that gender disparity in the workplace is a kind of discrimination that has a substantial impact on women's career and professional growth, in addition to the influence of the cultural phenomenon in which women perform greater household duties.

Similarly, O'Connor (2020) defines gender inequality as an assessment of the disparities between the roles of men and women in society. This author argued that the roles of men and women in society seem to be dichotomous, with certain jobs in the workplace being mainly male or female. Due to this amount of classical conditioning on the abilities of girls and boys, he suggested that women are underrepresented in senior executive positions. He asserts that some cultural factors tend to provide greater value to males, allowing them to occupy important managerial positions, while devaluing women and preventing them from holding such positions.

In addition, women are underrepresented among public sector leaders (DeHart-Davis et al., 2020). This researcher employed a problem-driven method to study gender and the reasons for gender disparity using inductive and deductive research. The study discovered that gender inequality is the most significant factor affecting women's career objectives. This demonstrates that women's underrepresentation in organizations, such as leading authorship and editorial board roles in sports sciences, is decreasing even as women's participation in the workplace increases (Martinez-Rosales, 2021).

However, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not excluded from the problem of women's underrepresentation. For instance, culture, religion, and traditions play an essential part in the social lives of the people of Saudi Arabia. This is due to the fact that cultural practices are interwoven into religion, which gives moral guidance. However, recent developments in Saudi Arabia have necessitated policy adjustments to assure the achievement of Saudi Vision 2030 goals. In other words, the vision includes the realization of human rights principles, particularly in the reduction of gender disparity. This entails empowering Saudi women in several fields by integrating them into society and granting them access to positions of leadership (Alhazmi & Kamarudin, 2021). As a

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consequence, the scope of this study will be limited to Saudi opinions on the underrepresentation of women in senior management positions.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

This study will investigate the following issues:

- a. What are the reasons why women are underrepresented in executive positions in the public sector?
- b. What are the best approaches for combating the underrepresentation of women in the Saudi public sector's managerial positions?

## IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Both the substance and breadth of this study are essential. This study seeks to investigate, for instance, the variables that prevent Saudi women from holding positions of high management. The majority of the time, gender disparity arises from organizational structure and cultural factors, consequently restricting women's prospects of attaining top management positions. In other words, this study will be used as a working document by policymakers and organizations to develop best practices for including women in top leadership positions within businesses. Students and academics in management and gender studies would also find this book useful for enhancing their understanding of gender disparity. This study, for instance, addresses a research need in the area by examining the future of women's involvement and engagement in top executive roles, as opposed to just identifying the characteristics of gender inequality or its consequences for women.

## RESEARCH THEORY

The social roles theory will serve as the primary analytical framework for this study. In other words, social role theory may be effective for explaining gender inequalities. This idea posits that corporate leaders have diverse expectations about the attitudes, behavioral patterns, and behaviors of their workers in relation to their social positions (Swanson, 2020). This theory also indicates that male and female workers who behave in accordance with their social roles may be subject to discrimination on the basis of their gender-stereotypical circumstances. For instance, women are ascribed a greater capacity for nurturing owing to their ability to provide care, whereas men are always associated with more strength than women due to their masculinity. As a consequence of the various responsibilities that must be completed, the majority of the top leadership roles are designated for men.

Therefore, this theory is appropriate for studying the Saudi viewpoint on gender imbalance in attaining positions of top management in Saudi Arabia. This would serve as a framework to guide the study's analysis in discovering new routes and approaches for reducing gender disparity in Saudi Arabia's workplace.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This section focuses on the techniques used for data collection and analysis. Due to the data analysis, qualitative sec-

ondary research was used for the nature of the issue. This entails a literature review pertinent to the issue at hand.

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A qualitative method would aid the researcher in analyzing the perspectives of past authors on the topic. It is more appropriate because, unlike the quantitative approach, which focuses on numbers and quantity, it employs visual tools, textual analysis, discourse analysis, and other non-statistical techniques to understand human behavior and its causes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In addition, by using a qualitative technique, the researcher was able to assess the acquired data without favoring a specific viewpoint or forming conclusions based on the viewpoints that best suited them (Pannucci & Wilkis, 2010)

## SECONDARY RESEARCH

This study's data gathering and analysis are based on secondary sources. This study makes use of secondary analysis by gathering verified existing data from prior researchers on comparable issues. In a similar manner, the researcher chose this methodology due to the lack of options for performing primary research. Despite this, using this strategy in this study improved the researcher's grasp of the research topic and allowed her to answer the research questions.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data for this study were obtained digitally from internet publications. The researcher searched PubMed for the JCR using terms such as "gender," "gender inequality," and "gender and leadership." Some of the used journals are ranked Q1 through Q4. In order to get material from internet sources, other search engines, such as Google Scholar, were used. After collecting data, the researcher eliminated sources that were not directly relevant to the topic at hand. The researcher then confirmed that only sources with current publication dates were included. This was done to prevent the use of obsolete knowledge in research.

## ETHICS

During the course of doing this investigation, various obstacles were faced. For instance, the lack of literature on this topic made it almost hard to study. However, the researcher verified that only credible sources as it relied on accurate reliable data, information and results were used for the study and that the research was conducted without fraud, plagiarism or falsification of information and everything that harms scientific research work. She is, then, confident in the research content and the results it reached. The researcher also worked not to impersonate any person, and not to quote his information or data and present it as his personal work.

Other ethical considerations in this study were the right treatment of data to accurately portray the information provided by earlier researchers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The greatest method to preserve gender equality in all sectors of life, particularly in the workplace, is to guarantee that

boys and girls are given equal rights, resources, prospective opportunities, and safety (UNICEF, 2021). Knowledge of feminist education's ethics and principles will improve understanding of gender roles and raise awareness of feminist beliefs (Potvin & Dority, 2022). These researchers hypothesized that a greater awareness of gender equality and comprehension of the true meaning of feminism on the part of instructors and students would aid in guiding individuals in the placement of gender roles within their organizations, particularly in higher education institutions where women also deserve top management positions. Other studies, such as Pagel, Freed, and Lien (2019), discovered restricted possibilities for women on the Journal of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia's editorial board. Women continue to be underrepresented on the editorial board of the Journal of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia, according to these authors.

Similarly, an organization's human resource procedures reveal the extent of its gender imbalance (Alhazmi & Kamarudin). This indicates that the technique by which the human resources management of a business employs new workers or promotes the workforce into new top management roles reflects the corporate culture and opinions on gender inequality. Researchers have also asserted that the amount of women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia has led to a paradigm change in the role of Saudi women in the workforce (Parveen, 2021). According to the findings of this study, a number of government reforms would improve workplace practices and eliminate gender imbalance at various levels of leadership. This researcher suggested that the position of women in the Saudi labor field has started to improve as women demonstrate their talents and decision-making sense. In light of this, he thought that the path to gaining higher heights in executive management roles was as follows.

In addition, Saudi women have used resistance to guarantee that gender complexity and disparities are eradicated from the job (Thomas & Calvard, 2021). This focuses on ethical philosophies and all aspects of society, including cultural, religious, social, political, and economic aspects. These authors argued that this sort of resistance could not be collective, but might be sensed through women's self-affirmation. These researchers also argued that in order for women to achieve gender equality in leadership roles, they must demonstrate a thorough devotion to duty and reject any sort of societal or workplace conditioning or stereotyping. They said that women should be allowed to demonstrate their loyalty in accordance with Islamic teachings. To guarantee the efficacy of women's involvement in leadership roles in Saudi Arabia, government assistance is required (Gorondutse, et al., 2021). The study discovered that indirect government funding might aid in the development of feminism's future perspective.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to the preceding debate, prior academics appear to be in agreement on the issue of gender disparities in obtaining top management positions. This study will focus on presenting the viewpoint of Saudi Arabia on this topic. The study discovered that Saudi women are disproportionately represented in positions of executive management. The ex-

planation for this is attributed to the concept of a male-dominated society. The study discovered that women's empowerment, government backing, and resistance to certain prejudices might alleviate the issue of disparities in the Saudi labor sector.

## CONCLUSION

Gender imbalance in Saudi Arabia's top management positions is a complex phenomenon that can be seen in organizational structures, processes, and practices. For women, some of the most harmful gender inequalities are enacted within human resources (HRs) practices. This is because HR practices (i.e., policies, decision-making, and their enactment) affect the hiring, training, pay, and promotion of women.

Several strategies, including government backing and women's demonstration of their abilities in the workplace, might help remove this misconception, as shown by the findings.

Importantly, institutional discrimination in organizational structures, processes, and practices plays a preeminent role because not only do they affect HR practices, they also provide a socializing context for organizational decision makers' levels of hostile and benevolent sexism. Although we portray gender inequality as a self-reinforcing system that can perpetuate discrimination, important levers for reducing discrimination have been identified.

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