The Role of the Glass Ceiling on Organizational Commitment of Female Academic Staff in Jordanian Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

The current study examined the role of the glass ceiling on the organizational commitment of female academic staff in Jordanian Higher Education Institutions. Workplaces dominated by gender discrimination and a glass ceiling tend to have employees with less organizational commitment and lose experienced, and knowledgeable female talent. 245 participants were included in the study and asked to rate their level of agreement using a Likert scale on multiple statements regarding their perspectives/beliefs on two questionnaires (glass ceiling and organizational Commitment). Our findings indicated that there is a negative correlation between three dimensions of the glass ceiling; family barriers (r= - 0.68), social barriers (r= - 0.51) organizational barriers (r= - 0.77) and organizational commitment were significant. Among the dimensions of the glass ceiling, family barriers and organizational barriers were the best predictors of organizational commitment..

Keywords: *Women, Jordan, Academic members, Glass ceiling, Organizational commitment, Empowerment, Higher education.*

Introduction

In 1986, the journal of Wall Street reported on the presence of barriers against women advancement in corporations using the new term of the "glass ceiling" (Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986). This report proclaimed that women are restrained from passing above a certain level in workplaces; the obstacles or restricted factors are associated with discriminative behaviours rather than being related to women's incapacity to manage jobs at higher or decision positions. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission examined the barriers that interpreted the advancement and development of women's career paths as well as enforcing gender-equal practices and procedures for minorities and encouraging women to be in managerial and leadership positions (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). Acknowledgement of the existence of the glass ceiling phenomena was admitted by the Commission's members and the effect of such phenomena on minorities and commonly women; all of which restrict them from reaching decision-making positions. It also highlighted the destructive impact of the glass ceiling on business and the work environment. Depending on that, the current research is aimed to explore the role of the glass ceiling on organizational commitment. The scope of work, which is higher education institutions in Jordan, is selected because women are still under-represented as researchers and leaders in the higher education sector in Jordan. According to the latest statistics published by Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research; female academic staff accounted for only 20% in the academic year 2023/2024 which decreased by 8% from the previous academic year 2022/2023 (Ministry of higher education and Scientific research, 2024). Furthermore, and despite the fact that more than the half of universities' student are female, women continued to be 'concentrated at the bottom of the academic ladder' in both administrive and research streams (diefat et.al, 2024).

Literature

Generally- speaking, organizations in male-dominated environments tend to overlook women's ideas and efforts and departed them to feel devalued and under-utilized. Women are usually offered lower-level assignments or tasks with weaker visibility, and their opinions are often neglected, a condition named the "invisible-woman syndrome" (Uysal, 2020). During the recruitment process, women are favored to be hired in technical fields where that hardly tracked to the top management. Furthermore, they also have limited

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opportunities to perform duties or missions that increase their visibility and enhance their chances to be promoted. Additionally, few women had the opportunity in being assigned to revenue-making positions which weakened their chances to show up (Del Carpio, 2022). In fact, under such circumstances, women are expected to work harder than men do to prove themselves and their abilities to be a manager, in contrast to men who are acknowledged to be suitable for managerial positions simply with little effort. On the other side, even women who reached managerial and leadership positions are placed under social and public pressure from being highly monitored and scrutinized. This also pushes women to work harder than their men coworkers; they are often viewed as a role model for other women in the future (Del Carpio, 2022; Tabassum and Nayak, 2021).

The Glass ceiling phenomenon can be explained by three causes: work/family conflict, lack of professional networking, and stereotyping in leadership styles (Taparia and Lenka, 2022; Oakley, 2000). The conflict of work/family places women in status with no flexibility in time to be available afternoon or out of office hours. Thus, they are deprived of many informal tasks, and that affects their progress into managerial positions and advancement (Eghlidi and Karimi, 2020). Similarly, women have less interaction with influential and powerful people in organizations this professional networking is entirely related to organizational advancement and lack of access to this networking causes a glass ceiling for women's promotions (Eghlidi and Karimi, 2020). And finally, Stereotypical views and beliefs about gender functions are dominant; men are considered to be more skillful and powerful compared to women who are considered to be more sociable and more communal. Depending on these considerations, each gender type is supposed to be appropriately fitted in different jobs or functions; in other words, positions are stereotyped as requiring typical types of traits. For example, managerial positions are primarily held by men as they are stereotypically represented as being assertive, confident, and other traits that are matched with the leadership traits (Oakley, 2000). According to Bolden and his team (2023), in the last five decades, the link between male traits and the needed qualities of a leadership role is specified in all counties around the world.

According to gender gap report 2024 by the world economic forum, Jordan is one of the leading countries in MENA in achieving equality in the domain of access to health and education. However, still lagging the domain of empowerment in political and economic fields. In politics, women representation in the Jordanian parliament is only 13.10% (compared to 15.4% in 2020) of the total seats, and their presence in ministerial positions accounted for 22.22% (compared to 20.8% in 2020) of the total ministerial positions. In workplaces, glass ceiling is detectable; for instance, the differences between female to male in senior positions like legislators, senior officials and managers is (-5.07). This weak representation and participation in managerial positions and leadership roles in Jordanian political and economic fields are rationalized to the prevalent judgment that perceives women to be poorly fit in these positions and roles as they lack the qualities that are believed to be required for succeeding in male gender-typed places (Abu-Tineh, 2013). Traditionally, it is believed that these positions and roles require masculine qualities like logical thinking, assertive, rational, in contrast to, conventionally feminine qualities like emotional sensitivity and compromise (Bolden et al., 2023; Tabassum and Nayak, 2021). Hence, these perceptions and beliefs are behind the mindset that perceived women as less appropriate and valuable for managerial positions and leadership roles as compared to men in Jordanian society (Abu-Tineh, 2013).

Organizational commitment is impacted by the glass ceiling (Dost et al., 2012). Commitment is the perspective of an organization that is translated into performance and loyalty to the organization. Workplace atmosphere dominated by gender discrimination and gender stereotyping; tends to have employees with less organizational commitment and high employee turnover rates and lose experienced, and knowledgeable individuals. Furthermore, organization that do not deliver proper career opportunities for women loses hard working women and fail to achieve competitive performance. Therefore, the glass ceiling is costly; firms could have serious financial losses due to a discriminative work environment as it is associated with weak performance, lower spirit, high absenteeism, and dissatisfaction with organizations (Pothuraju and Alekhya, 2021). Organizational commitment impacts overall performance and the outputs of the organization such as serious financial losses, weak performance, lower spirit, high absenteeism, and dissatisfaction.

Material and Methods

Sampling

A simple random technique was adopted to recruit participants in this study. Participants were asked to fill out two online surveys via email, and respondent count was observed to reach the statistically optimum sample size. The optimum sample size was estimated we use Cochran's formula (equation no. 1). In our case the total population are female academic members employed in higher education insinuations in Jordan. According to the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2422 female academic staff are registered academic members (Ministry of higher education and scientific research, 2024). Thus, for a given level of precision (estimated error margin is 5%) and desired level of confidence (Z-value is 1.645 for a confidence level of 90%); a total of 245 or more of academic members employed in higher education insinuations in Jordan is needed to guarantee an optimum sample size and ensure the generalizability component of the study.

$$Sample\ size\ = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2} \qquad (1)$$

A total of 249 respondents was obtained. Table 1 shows the demographics of our sample. Our sample represents comparable portions between age groups where 38% of the sample are less than 35 years old, 31% are between 35 to 50 years old and 31% are older than 50 years old. Furthermore, more than half of the participants; 58% (n=144), were employed in public universities and over 60% of our participants were employed in universities located in the central region of Jordan. This pattern is explained by the fact that the geographic locations of universities in Jordan are concentrated in the central region followed by North and South. Finally, almost half of participants (54%) had job tenure, meaning they have more than 10 years of experience in their current employment.

Table 1: Demographics of the sample

| Demographics items	Frequency	% of total
Age		
<35	94	38%
35-50	78	31%
>50	77	31%
University type		
Private University	105	42%
Public University	144	58%
University location		
Central Region	152	61%
North Region	66	27%
South Region	31	12%
Total Years of experience in your current employment		
<10	114	46%
11-20	90	36%
>20	45	18%

Questionnaire Validity and Reliability

The first Survey was about the glass ceiling phenomenon; it assessed how female academic members recognize the barriers to their advancement in their career paths. Using a five-point Likert scale from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree, the first questionnaire investigated the level of glass ceiling women faced based on six dimensions of barriers; personal, family, cultural, social, legal and organizational. For each dimension 2 to 5 items were asked. The second survey was about organizational commitment; it is designed to test the level of commitment female academic members have. Similar to the first survey, the second questionnaire utilizes a five-point Likert scale from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree to test the level of engagement and dedication women academic members feel toward their jobs based on three dimensions; affective commitment (affection for the organization), continuous commitment (fear of loss) and normative commitment (sense of obligation to stay). For each dimension 2 to 3 items were asked. The two questionnaires were in the same platform and submissions of respondents were approved only if both questionnaires were answered. Reliability test using Cronbach's coefficient alpha was conducted to confirm the adherence across all dimensions. Values between 0.7-1.0 are accepted values for the reliability test. In our case, all Cronbach's alpha values are above 0.7 and therefore we can confirm the internal consistency of the questionnaires. Finally, data was analyzed using correlational descriptive type of analysis; in which Pearson correlation coefficient, stepwise regression using excel.

Results and Discussion

Among 249 female academic members involved in the current study, the mean overall glass ceiling $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) was 3.14 $\pm$ 0.07, in which 47% (n=117) of participants believed that the glass ceiling existed (rate 4 "agree" and 5 "strongly agree") and hindered them from further advancement in their jobs. Among those who believe in the existing glass ceiling, 84% (n=98) were employed for more than 10 years in their current employment and 77% (n=90) were employed in public universities. This can highlight the beliefs women with job tenure had regarding the barriers they faced against developing in academic institutions. In contrast, 39% (n=96) of participants rejected the existence of glass ceiling (rate 1 "strongly disagree" and 2 "disagree"), where only one participant rate 1 "strongly disagree". The remaining participants (14%, n=36) stated their position with neutral (rate 3). Differences in glass ceiling rates across all demographic groups, glass ceiling rates were statistically insignificant.

Comparably, and among 249 female academic members, the mean overall organizational commitment $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) was 2.98 $\pm$ 0.05, in which 39% (n=96) of participants had a low level of commitment toward their organization (rate 2 "disagree" and 1"strongly disagree"). Among those who have a low level of commitment, 86% (n=83) were employed for more than 10 years in their current employment and 79% (n=76) were employed in public universities. This also supports the insight we highlight above about the beliefs women with job tenure had regarding their jobs. In our study, most women with job tenure tend to have a low level of commitment (61% rate 1 "strongly disagree" and 2 "disagree") and suffer from barriers to advancement in their careers (73%, rate 4 "agree" and 5 "strongly agree"). On the other hand, 65% of women with less than 10 years in their current employment assure their level of commitment (rate 4 "agree" and 5 "strongly agree") and 67% reject the presence of hindrance toward promotions and advancement in their career (figure 1).

The differences in answers between the two groups: women with less than 10 years in the same employment and women with more than 10 years in the same employment; highlight the process of awareness of glass ceiling. While newly hired women in academia have a great perspective toward their jobs with elevated level of commitment and reject the presence of glass ceiling, the fact is the opposite for women with job tenure. Women with experience of more than 10 years in same employment seemed to be disappointed with recognizing of glass ceiling toward their development and admit low level of commitment. Uwannah (2023) underlined this phenomenon, where job tenure has factorial effect in determining the organizational commitment.

Figure (1): the variation in ratings depending on the total Years of experience in the current employment.
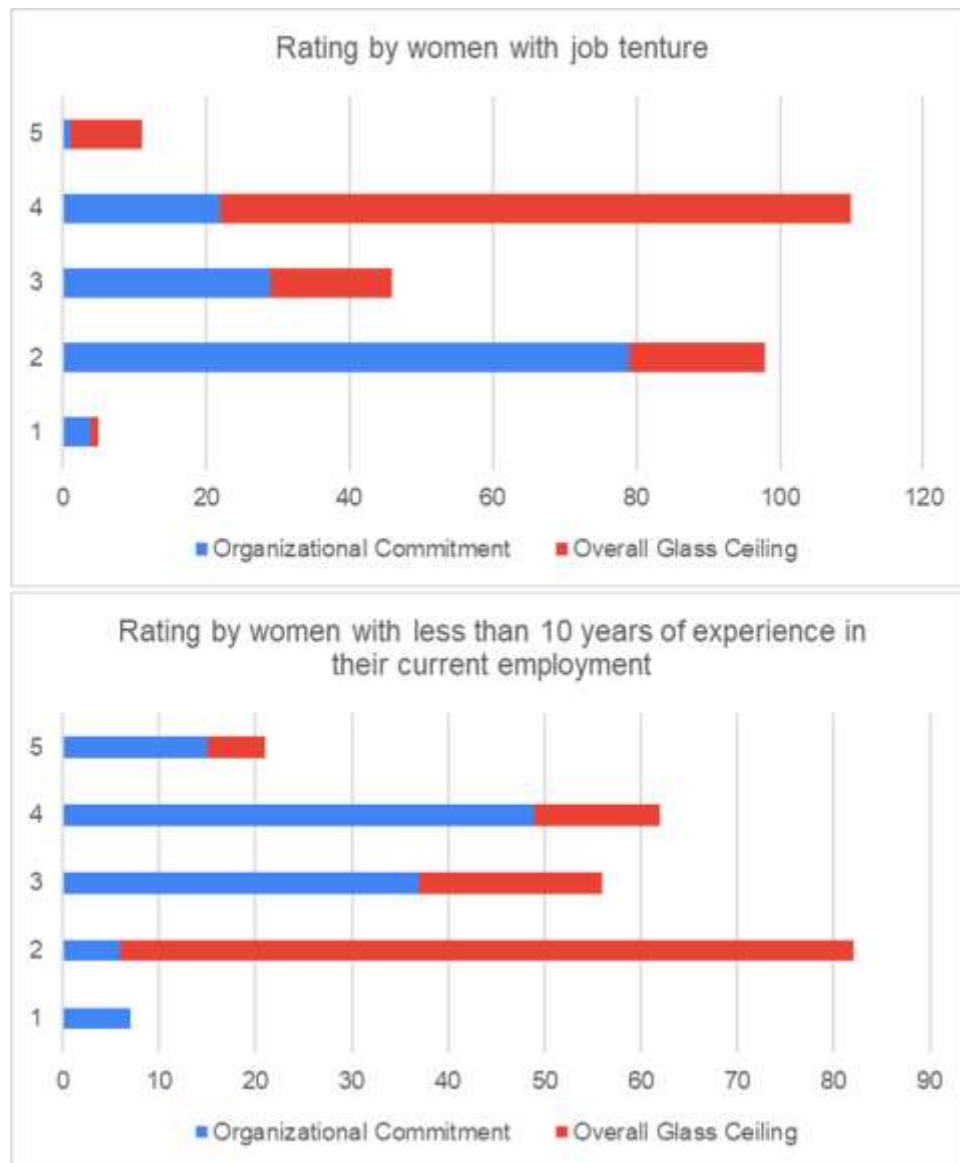
Pearson correlation test was applied to test the relationship between organizational commitment and dimensions of the glass ceiling, and we found a significant negative relationship between organizational commitment and each of the family barriers (r= - 0.68), social barrier (r= - 0.51) and organizational barriers (r= - 0.77) with significant p-value (< 0.01). Other glass ceiling dimensions (personal barriers, cultural barriers, social barriers, and legal barriers) also have a negative relationship but are not statistically significant. (Table 2)

Table 2: Correlation between Organizational commitment pf female academic staff and the dimensions of glass ceiling

Criterion variable: Organizational commitment	
Predictor variable	**Pearson correlation coefficient (r)**
Personal Barriers	-0.64
Family Barriers	-0.68*
Cultural Barriers	-0.56
Social Barriers	-0.51*
Legal Barriers	-0.66
Organizational Barriers	-0.77*

*P-value= < 0.01

The next step is to find the most predictor/s of organizational commitment using the regression model. However, and before we employ the regression model, a multicollinearity test was applied on independent variables (personal barriers, family barriers, cultural barriers, social barriers, legal barriers and organizational barriers) to exclude the possibility of multicollinearity between independent variables that might cause overlapping and increase the percentage of errors (Evans, 1996). All correlation coefficients were less than 0.8 and this assures the rejection of multicollinearity between dependent variables. We applied stepwise multiple regression analysis and indicated that the two glass ceiling dimensions (family barrier and organizational barrier) significantly affect overall organizational commitment. Table (3) shows the summary of the stepwise regression model with corresponding R-square. Organizational barrier explained 59.7% of the variability when applied alone in the equation. yet, the R-square rose to 66.8% when incorporating family barriers and organizational barriers. At a significance level of $p<0.005$ the regression model was developed with the two independent factors cited earlier and the theoretical model fit into the following equation:

$$Y = 5.61 - 0.27X1 - 0.56X2 \qquad (2)$$

Where Y is organizational commitment, X1 is the family barriers, and X2 is the organizational barriers. Equation (2) highlights that the organizational barrier has the highest impact among all the factors evaluated on organizational commitment as it corresponds to a beta value of - 0.56. followed by family barriers with beta values of - 0.27. In other words, organizational commitment can be predicted according to Equation (2) by the presence of family barriers and organizational barriers.

Table 3: Multiple regression stepwise model summary

Model	Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error
1 (family barrier and organizational barrier)	0.817	0.668	0.665	0.597
2 (organizational barrier)	0.772	0.597	0.595	0.656

The glass ceiling has a significant impact via the dimensions of family barriers and organizational barriers on the overall organizational commitment. Female academic members believed that family barriers and organizational barriers hindered them from getting promotions and advancing in their career. This is consistent with the study of Lu et al., (2008) in Taiwan, where the inability of achieving work/family balance was negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Furthermore, they found that changing in organizational policies to be more family-friendly such as work-time flexibility can satisfy employees and increase organizational commitment. Women, in particular, suffer from great pressure toward anchoring work-family balance and thus, the ignorance of organizations in recognizing women's needs to have this balance can clearly affect their job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Barati and ey, 2014). In our study, we figured out a strong relationship between the existence of family barriers and

organizational commitment among female academic members in higher education institutions in Jordan. This can be explained by the nature of jobs in academia, despite the need for physically attending classes and presence in offices during the office hours; a lot of research and administrative works are also required and obligated. All of which amplify work/family conflict and lead to low level of organizational commitment. as the academic institutions fail to include flexibility for women's work schedules, female academic members would have less organizational commitment. The other glass ceiling dimension that we found affecting the organizational commitment is the organizational barrier. Female academic members emphases that the polices and rules in higher education institutions are not articulated for women empowerment and reaching decision-making positions. Negative work environment that beers gender discrimination is also part of the organizational barrier that linked to low level of organizational commitment; in a study by Ing-Chung et.al, (2005), gender discrimination was negatively correlated to value commitment and stay commitment or loyalty. Multiple case studies (Yarmouk university and Hashemite university) highlighted the presence glass ceiling due to the lack of gender equality policies in higher education regulations and related authority. (Al-Awamlah et.al, 2015; Al-Omari, 2016) Therefore, encouraging gender equality in the higher education sector demands the collaboration of governments, civil society, and the broader community. Their continued efforts are necessary to address the remaining gender disparities in access, representation, policies and opportunities within higher education. (Alshdiefat et.al, 2024)

Conclusions

The glass ceiling that hinders women's advancement and development exists in academic jobs. our study emphasizes the role of family barriers and organizational barriers in reducing the level of commitment and loyalty toward employment. furthermore, we detected turning point of women perspective on glass ceiling that depend on the employment time. in which, women with experience of more than 10 years in same employment seemed to be disappointed with recognizing of glass ceiling toward their development and admit low level of commitment, while women with less than 10 years perceived the opposite.

Based on that, we recommend the following to lower to diminish the obstacles of the glass ceiling and improve the organizational commitment of female academic staff:

- Flexible working hours and working-from-home policies. incorporating these policies in academia's working policies would significantly improve work/family balance and diminish the family barriers.

- Equal opportunities policies that endorse women's promotion and advancement to increase their job commitment.

- Proper performance appraisal that takes into consideration women with longer experience and good fit for managerial positions.

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