

Glass Ceiling Effect On Women's Career Development In Public And Private Companies: A Comparative Study In Oman Oil and Gas Sector

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ABSTRACT: Omani women constitute less than 10 per cent of the employees in the Oil and Gas sector in Oman. This study presents about the glass ceiling factors effect on women's career development in public and private companies in Oman Oil and Gas sector. It aims to identify the factors that contribute to glass ceiling that affect women's career advancement. Several factors were identified while reviewing the literature; they are Organizational, Societal and Personal factors. Add to that, the study also aims to compare organizational, societal and personal factors effect in women career development in Oil and Gas sector. Data is collected by using a snowball sampling method where questionnaires were distributed among the female employees working in private and public Oil and Gas companies. Sample consists of 180 employees, out of those 60 respondents from public and 60 respondents from private different Oil and Gas companies who are in junior level. For presenting and analyzing the data, SPSS 26 software was used to perform independent T test, crosstabs frequency distribution and cluster bar graphs. From the analysis of data collected, it is seen that private sector employees are facing glass ceiling more in some aspects whereas public sector employees in few aspects.

Key Words: Career Development, Glass Ceiling, Organizational Factor, Personal Factor, Societal Factor

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, Omani women have made many achievements in different areas, in the light of their progress; they have become qualified to assume the highest leadership positions in private and public sectors in Oman. As the studies show that Petroleum Development Oman has made significant progress with 30% of its women leading management positions (PDO, 2017). Even though, there are many barriers and challenges that face the female Omani workers to fill high management positions in private and public companies. According to Gupta (2018), the expression Glass ceiling refers to the unseen barriers that block women from reaching the upper management level, despite their qualifications or fulfillments. Thus it is a metaphor used to describe the difficulty that faces women to move into senior leadership positions. Azeez and Priyadarshini (2018) identified the three major factors that affect the career of women advancement: they are personal factors, organizational factor and societal factors. They also examined which factor from the three identified factors contributes more to prevent the advancement of women's careers. The personal factors are referred to the individual's barriers that affect the female's performance. The organizational factors are the policies and procedures of the organization toward the advancement of women. The societal factors refer to the extent related to the employee development in beliefs and traditions.

1.1 Oil and Gas sector in Oman scenario

Oil and Gas production in Oman considered about half of the gross domestic product; the energy sector represents a crucial part in the employer of Omanis and a provider of proficiency and technology, as well as it is a source of the government revenue in the Sultanate. According to Allawati (2019), the Sultanate's Oil reserves

continue to increase, which means strengthening the country's annual budget. Oil is the main source of revenue in Oman, despite efforts to diversify sources of income and develop non-oil sectors that are gradually growing. Oman today has a production capacity of oil and condensate up to one million barrels per day for several years to come. The annual conference held by the Ministry of Oil and Gas on March 2019 disclosed that, the number of companies operates oil concession areas 19 national and international companies operating in 32 concession areas, while the concession areas will be granted this year. The needs of oil and oil products for the people of the world continue, which confirms that the oil and gas sector will remain of great importance in the coming stage despite the introduction of renewable energy products in some projects today. In the Sultanate, there will be more exploratory operations in the new exploration areas, while the ministry is developing policies and strategies to integrate with the industrial projects implemented in this sector. Add to that, the Minister of Oil and Gas also stated in the annual conference that, the number of employees working in different companies in the Oil and Gas sectors in Oman is increasing annually. The total number of employees in the company's operating the concession areas, the Oman Oil Company for refineries and industries of petrol, the Oman LNG Company and the Oman Gas Company reached 18095 employees by the end of 2018, including 14927 Omani employees and 3168 expatriates (18%). Last year, these companies employed 800 nationals in technical, engineering and administrative jobs (Oman daily, 2019). A female empowerment survey was undertaken by Oman Society of Petroleum Services (OPAL) on August 2018, the reports showed a strong bias that works against women in Oil and Gas sector. Omani women are facing a gender imbalance in Oman's Oil and Gas sector, as they represent a relatively smaller part of the workforce and it drops over time from (25% to 17%) than they do in other sectors. These women also employed disproportionately in office jobs and they have a limited presence in technical and upper management positions, which has an effect on their career progression (AlSinani, 2019).

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The focus of the research is upon the effect of glass ceiling factors women's career in both public and private companies and how it exists in Oil and Gas sector. As it is a general concept in Oman women have the full rights to education and work, even that until now many female workers facing some challenges and obstacles that limit their career progression and reaching ranks of senior positions. Women are confined with false beliefs that they cannot handle high level positions that prevent the possibility of organizations to benefit from their energy and skills, and that what made women lose confidence in their abilities to handle higher positions. Oil and Gas sector is one of the most important sectors that play a major role in Oman's economic growth and it needs a significant percentage of employees that can bear with the pressure and hard work, unfortunately, women workers in this sector are facing many challenges so there was a need to highlight this problem and raising awareness to eliminate the negative prevailing notion of women workers in this sector and break the glass ceiling. The problem is the examination of factors which contribute to the glass ceiling with respect to, personal factors, organizational factors, and societal factors and compare the factors effect in both private and public companies in Oman.

III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To study Glass Ceiling factors affecting women's career development in private and public companies in the Oil and Gas sector in Oman.
- To compare the organizational Glass Ceiling factor effect on women's career development in private and public companies in Oman Oil and Gas sector.
- To compare the societal Glass Ceiling factor effect on women's career development in private and public companies in Oman Oil and Gas sector.
- To compare the personal Glass Ceiling factor effect on women's career development in private and public companies in Oman Oil and Gas sector.

IV. HYPOTHESIS

H0: There is no significant difference in personal factors effect on women's career development in public and private companies.

H0: There is no significant difference in organizational factors effect on women's career development in public and private companies.

H0: There is no significant difference in societal factors effect on women's career development in public and private companies.

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study will be focused on female employees in private and public companies in both Oil and Gas sector in Oman. As it is known Omani female workers managed to work in various fields until they reached the most important sector in the Sultanate which is the Oil and Gas sector. Nevertheless, until now many of female

workers are surrounding with challenges that effect their career development so, through this study the researchers will make a comparative investigation to compare the glass ceiling effect on women in both public and private companies in Oil and Gas sector. Researchers destine to use three main factors that specified while reviewing the literature (personal, organizational, societal) to identify its impact on women workers on this sector. The researchers are planning to prepare a questionnaire and distribute it among female employees in private and public companies in different Oil and Gas companies in Oman. Some examples of private Oil and Gas companies are (Daleel Petroleum and OXY) and examples of public Oil and Gas companies are (PDO and ORPIC). The scope of this study is comprehensive as it's not only focusing on finding the effect of glass ceiling, but will also find how public and private companies differ in dealing with Glass Ceiling.

VI. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lewis (2019), defined glass ceiling as it is a metaphor for the hard to see barriers that are related to prevent women from getting promoted, pay raises, and further developments. While The Economist Newspaper (2009) mentioned that the term glass ceiling was first known in 1986 in the *Wall Street Journal*; the concept behind this expression was that a transparent problem which blocked women from ascending to senior management positions in corporations. In 1990 the glass ceiling phenomenon was also studied to present the absence of women in higher positions of public and private companies. Moreover, glass ceiling is sometimes used to state the huge wage gap in upper levels of income distribution so that according to Arfken, Bellar, and Helms (2004), female employees are paid lower in compare to the male counterparts. As a result, glass ceiling prevents women from getting higher level positions. Whither (2015), explored the causes that reduce women's chance for a leadership position is the way that the women look to herself and lack of confidence in her abilities and self-potential, her unwillingness to work, her fear of failure and poor rehabilitation and training. While, Melero (2014), elaborated that, the woman has the ability to manage more than man moreover the woman is more democratic and has better communication skills than a man so, we need to change perception concerning the woman that they are less qualified and make more woman bosses.

Powell (2010), demonstrated that individual factors refer to women's self-esteem and confidence and their own expectations which play a crucial role in women career development, there are many companies underestimate the woman because of the wrong expectation that women have low confidence and fear of taking the risk, although it's very easy to overcome and it's not considered as a formidable barrier that prevents women career development.

On another hand, Piha (2006), argued that the feminine characteristics don't fit with the leadership position and man will be always more appropriate and qualified to fill the higher position, although many studies have been proven that the woman characterized by high social and communication skills. Sojrani (2018) spotted that organizations are a part of women's managerial career development, as the organization's management have the power of making direct decisions on giving leadership promotion to female workers by enrolling and offering career development. In addition, it was found that woman's chances to become managers in various departments and that the career advancement is slowed down by strong gender division in the labor market. Furthermore, Azeez and Priyadarshini (2018) identified that organizational factor was one of the factors that contribute more to preventing the career advancement opportunity for female workers in the IT industry in India. The organizational factors include the organization policy which is the significant one and organizational culture and the perception of the management. On the other hand, Posholi (2013) stated that women continue to deal with significant barriers to career advancement in their organizations and his study disclosed that most of the women have been working in their organizations for a long time, but a few or none of them have been promoted to new positions once or twice while some have never been promoted at all. Sahoo and Lenka, (2016) stated that women are given unimportant tasks even if they occupy high management positions in the company. In addition, most women are given operational positions rather than managerial positions, because society believes that women perform more in operational work rather than administrative tasks. Furthermore, Ansari (2016) mentioned that in managerial positions, men are given priority because of their belief in gender roles. Women are secondary because management believes that women are unable to accomplish additional tasks, take up administrative work and work long hours because they are responsible for maternity. On the other hand, Tlaiss & Kauser, (2010) elaborated that in society, men are expected to be tough and focused on the physical side and achieve the goal of the company more than women who are perceived with humility and concern for life. Masculine culture in companies affects the glass ceiling of the institution; women must work harder and more accomplished than men managers in order to get career promotions.

a. Conceptual Framework

The main idea emphasized by the conceptual framework which is exhibited in Fig.1 is, how glass ceiling factors influence women's career development. The factors contributing to the glass ceiling are considered independent variables and career development of women as dependent variables. Accordingly, the

career life of women is depending on several independent variables. Personal factors, organizational factors, and societal factors have been identified as the independent variables in this conceptual framework. Therefore, it's found that personal factors are related to self-perception, confidence, responsibilities, ability to work and ambitious women. And organizational factors refer to the top management support, promotions, organizational policy, organizational culture and involvement of women in the decision making. Moreover, societal factors are considered as a religion, social beliefs, traditions, stereotype and social constraints that can directly affect women's career life.

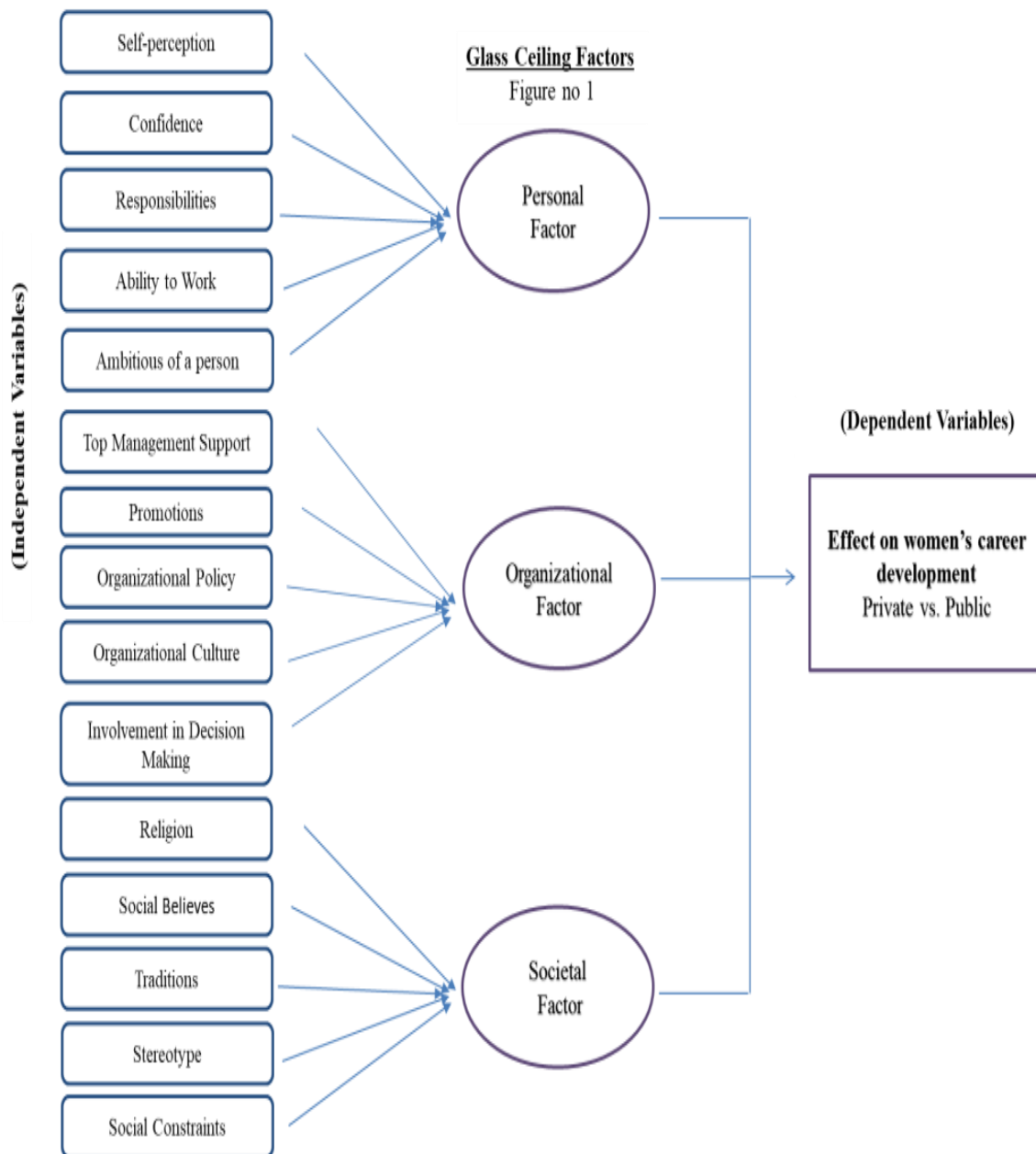


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is descriptive research. It describes the factors related to glass ceiling factors that affects women's career development in public and private companies, hence it is descriptive research. A quantitative research method was used by researchers to collect the opinion of respondents thru Likert's 5 point scale. Their responses included the glass ceiling effects on women's career development based on organizational, societal and personal factors. Add to that, this research defines the differences in factors that affect women's development in public and private Oil and Gas companies. A questionnaire was designed as data

collection method, which consists of 18 statements that researchers would like the respondents to answer. The researchers used a non-probability snowball sampling technique, where existing participant nominates others to conduct the questionnaire for the study purpose. The target respondents of this research were the women workers from junior levels in Oil and Gas sector in Oman from the public and private companies. The research respondents comprised of 160 employees 80 of the respondents are from public sector and 80 from private sector were selected by the researchers to get a guarantee that the respondent would be measured from all the companies selected with smaller margins of error. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed through SPSS 26 software and Microsoft excel and presented in tables and cluster bar graphs. Independent T-test was used to compare between two unrelated groups (in this research Private Companies and Public companies) to determine the differences by interpreting and reporting the results from this test. In addition, the researchers used Point Analysis method to calculate the opinion of respondents based on the weights (5) Strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree and (1) Strongly Disagree.

VIII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Table.1 it is found that, Organisational Factor $t(151.143) = -10.298$, $p = .000$ significance (2.tailed) p value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), Societal factor $t(141.694) = -6.590$, $p = .000$ significance (2.tailed) p value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), Personal factor $t(152.287) = -4.699$, $p = .000$ significance (2.tailed) p value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) null hypothesis was rejected in all the three factors. Hence, there are some differences between public and private companies related to the three factors. The reason might be that there are differences in some policies and structures in public and private companies and the way in how organizations operate and how they deal with their employees. Also it might be because of the different understanding of culture and values from the employees as a member of different society. And that how employees have differences in their personalities and how they perceive things in the public and private companies.

Independent Samples Test										
Table no.1										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Organizational	Equal variances assumed	4.896	.028	-10.298	158	.000	-.9287	.0902	-1.1069	-.7506
	Equal variances not assumed			-10.298	151.143	.000	-.9287	.0902	-1.1069	-.7506
Societal	Equal variances assumed	15.384	.000	-6.590	158	.000	-.6675	.1013	-.8675	-.4675
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.590	141.694	.000	-.6675	.1013	-.8677	-.4673
Personal	Equal variances assumed	5.305	.023	-4.699	158	.000	-.5113	.1088	-.7261	-.2964
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.699	152.287	.000	-.5113	.1088	-.7262	-.2963

Table 1: Independent 'T' Test – Comparison between Public & Private Companies

IX. CONCLUSION

The career aspiration of woman developed during the last century which leads to increase their participation in labor force, so women today are able to work in many sectors. However, there are several factors effecting women's career development which are not apparent as it called Glass Ceiling. This study was done to discuss about the glass ceiling factors affect and how these factors affect women in their career advancement in particular to the Oil and Gas sector in Oman. The main factors of glass ceiling identified through literature review were Organizational, Societal and Personal factors. Through this comprehensive study, the level of data collection of glass ceiling measured according to the factors. The research has been conducted

in Oil and Gas sector in both private and public companies. Despite being one of the largest industries in Oman, women in Oil and Gas sector still face gender bias. Hence, the study found that organizational factors are the one that hinder women from achieving their career advancement goals in Oil and Gas sector. Other factors like societal and personal factors contribute almost in equal amount to hindrance in achieving their advancement goals. Furthermore, the questionnaire results shows that there are many differences in organizational policies and structures compared between public and private companies, as the private sector facing more glass ceiling toward giving the female employees equal opportunities to get promoted and they tend to exercise less involvement in decision making. However, it is seen that women in both private and public companies, due to the societal beliefs and stereotype, the study reveals that social support and perception has a great impact on women's career progression. In addition, as the society belief men can handle better the leadership positions and they think that women are having less efficiency to perform their work. Moreover, the research found that the personal factor is not depending on the type of the company. Different personality has different way of thinking; from the analysis it could be understand that women have self-confidence and they are willing to handle more work responsibilities too but the way they perceive about themselves and their lack of ambition prevent their career advancement. In view to all the above, it is essential for organizations to understand and accept the equal opportunities to all individuals regardless of gender. Social support from colleagues and society members plays an important role to women's career development. In addition, working woman should continuously seek to develop her career and be more ambitious. And finally, career advancement does not only benefit the employees, but also a good recipe for success of an organization in a variety of ways. Moreover, the research found that the personal factor is not depending on the type of the company. Different personality has different way of thinking; from the analysis it could be understand that women have self-confidence and they are willing to handle more work responsibilities too but the way they perceive about themselves and their lack of ambition prevent their career advancement. In view to all the above, it is essential for organizations to understand and accept the equal opportunities to all individuals regardless of gender. Social support from colleagues and society members plays an important role to women's career development. In addition, working woman should continuously seek to develop her career and be more ambitious. And finally, career advancement does not only benefit the employees, but also a good recipe for success of an organization in a variety of ways.

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