The attitude of women faculty members toward barriers in advancement to higher positions

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitude of women faculty members toward the barriers in advancement to management positions in respect to their works and management skills. A total of 100 women faculty members of physical education and women faculty members in social science discipline who were teaching in higher education institutions served as the population of this study. In order to measure the intended variables, Kattara's questionnaire to measure the barriers to advancement of women achieving to management positions, Mihail's questionnaire to measure women's attitudes toward work, and Kaufman's questionnaire were used to measure managerial skills. The results of regression analysis showed that women due to organizational culture of patriarchy and gender discrimination would not be able to easily advance to managerial positions. No significant differences were found between women physical education faculty members and the women faculty members in social science discipline. The participants indicated that this is the gender identity which determines people positions in management and not their merits.

Key words: women, higher position, barrier

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INTRODUCTION

Considering the position of women as half of a community human resources is of particular importance. Usually, despite the unfavorable social position of women, they play significant role in society. Although the growth indicators related to development of women's participation is extremely impressive in the last four years, but compared to the women's ability, there is still a considerable distance. Participation of women in a large part of society activities such management and decision-making were associated with limitations. This general principle which more or less holds true everywhere in the world implies well that "women are not where the power is" [5].

Scholars consider the human as center of development; they believe that the degree of society's development depends on the efficient use of their whole human resources. Considering that women are half of the human resources in each society, the extent of their participations in governing political, economical, social, cultural and sport affairs has substantial impact on the degree of development in countries. In fact, one of the most important criteria of measuring the range of a country's development is the rate of importance and credit of women in that country. The UN reports the indicators of country's gender enabling every year and also recommends the importance of women power and empowering them to meet the development [10].

Although the management of women in various governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions has led to significant achievements, but nevertheless general tendency of organizations is to select male managers. It

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seems that gender of managers is case of an attitude more than competence and capability. The situation due to gender inequalities has caused that many countries try to do some actions to tackle these inequalities and based on the current situation use the women powers in managerial positions. This inequality in use of women in managerial positions can be seen well not only in governmental and non-governmental organizations, but also it is true in educational institutions such as universities and higher education institutions especially in sport organizations. In spite of the world efforts, many managerial positions are still dominated by men. Therefore, the discrimination against women remained a real struggle for women in many countries as it is evident in their absence in decision and policy making in government [12]

Today, despite understanding the importance of women social participation by scholars and politicians and applying women in job market (more in developed countries and less in developing countries), due to the society negative attitudes women working outside the home, yet many women (both employed and unemployed) feel their presence in society is in conflict with their family responsibilities [13]. At the same time with improving the situation of women in different social scenes and incidence of their hidden talents, their competence in this case has proved; also proving women's presence in society in a desirable way, make their role more obvious in ability of participation in administration and management. However, women are facing a long and difficult way to express their abilities and competence in this case. Despite the merit of woman holding managerial positions, the society doesn't consider a notable role for her at this level. Even in the matters related to women, men constitute the majority of high level managers and women are responsible of middle level management. The main reason of this problem can be gender differences between men and women and in some cases it can be the society lack of attention to women's talents and special skills in doing managerial tasks. Of course, this problem can remove by the correct policies and informing the society [15].

This inequality in the use of women in managerial positions can be seen not only in economical organizations, but also in universities and higher education institutions as well. Considering the features of a manager from psychological aspect regardless of his/her gender, scholars of industrial organizations believed that behavioral characteristics play very important role. They refer to these psychological treats as leadership style, job self-efficacy, locus of controlling, job satisfaction (external or internal), individual behavior, attitude toward work, management skill. They consider these traits are important that managers should possess regardless their gender or the organization in which they work. [9].

Mathipa and Tsoka [5] investigated the possible barriers to advancement of women to leadership positions in education profession. They reported that if women are assisted, encouraged, guided and appreciated, then they could blossom and also show vibrancy, curiosity, adventure and boldness never happened. Subramanian et al. [9] showed that the variables of family related barriers, negative stereotype, glass ceiling and talent management significantly contributed 36 percent to the variation in women managers' career progression in Malaysian women. Rassaei and Mohamadi [8] showed that from the perspective of faculty member of physical educations, social barriers for women inhibited them to presence in sport stadiums. Pasque and Errington [11] reported that the reason of having not access of women to senior positions of decision making in higher education, is a continuing discrimination against women. They further showed that women are facing discriminations that reduce their abilities to obtain senior positions in higher education institutions.

The purpose of this study is based on these assumptions that are there any possibility to predict the barriers of women advancement to managerial positions? Is there any relationship between possible barriers to women achieving management positions and variables such as attitude to work, humanity, and managerial skills? Statistically, can we propose a regression equation by which to predict the possible barriers of women advancement to managerial positions? In addition, this study is looking for the response to this assumption that are physical education faculties facing the same barriers as faculty members in some other discipline advancing to managerial positions? Although the results of this study could only be generalized to the population under the investigation, but if further analysis of data from other studies lead to the same conclusions, then the results of this study could be generalized. It might then be possible to propose some key variables that will play important roles removing the barriers that the women are facing in advancement to managerial positions.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a correlation study that uses quantitative approach and survey method to collect the data. A total of 100 women faculty members of physical education and women faculty members in social science discipline who were teaching in higher education institutions in Alborz, Province, Iran, served as the population of this study.

In order to measure the intended variables, Kattara's questionnaire [7] to measure the barriers to advancement of women achieving to management positions, Mihail's questionnaire [3] to measure women's attitudes toward work, and Kaufman's questionnaire [2]to measure managerial skills, were used. Participants were responding the questionnaires in a five Likert type. Psychometric characteristics of the scales (validity and reliability) in this study and some other studies are reported satisfactory. For instance, the questionnaires validity for the barriers to progress, attitude to women's work and managerial skills of women in this study were reported to be 0.86, 0.88 and 0.80, respectively.

For data analysis, first the simple correlation coefficients between the intended variables were calculated. To verify which of the independent variables are able to predict the criterion variable, the stepwise regression analysis method, which is the best statistical method in this case, was used. In addition, two group independent t- tests compared the attitude of the participants.

RESULTS

Table 1 illustrates the simple correlation coefficients between the variables of women physical education faculties and women faculty members in social sciences discipline. The contents of table 1 shows those relationships between the variables that are significant at $p<0.05$.

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient between the variables of study

Variable	field	1	2	3
1. Barriers to progress	Physical Education	-	0.31*	-0.13
	Social Sciences	-	0.33*	-0.10
2. Attitude to work	Physical Education	-	-	0.20
	Social Sciences	-	-	0.10
3. Managerial Skills	Physical Education	-	-	-
	Social Sciences	-	-	-

significant at $P<0.05$

The contents of tables 2 and 3 show that the best predictor variable in justifying the barriers to women advancement in workplace is the attitudes of managers towards their work in both disciplines. Both regression equations with F=5.90 for physical education faculties and F=6.30 for faculties in the field of social sciences are significant at P<0.05. The regression coefficients through a stepwise method indicate the accuracy of selecting the variable that managers show toward the women's work in predicting the barriers to their advancement in workplace.

Table 2: Regression coefficients between the variables in physical education faculties

Criterion variable	Predictor variable	R	R^2	F, P	β Attitude to work
Barrier to progress P= 0.01 t= 2.40 p= 0.01	Attitude to work	0.30	0.10	5.90	β= 0.30

Table 3: Regression coefficients between the variables in social science faculties

Criterion variable	Predictor variable	R	R^2	F, P	β Attitude to work
Barrier to progress p= 0.01	Attitude to work	0.33	0.11	6.30 P= 0.01	β= 0.33 t= 2.50

Table 4 shows the results of testing the last assumption that compares the attitudes between faculty members in physical education and the faculty members in social sciences discipline toward the possible barriers to their advancement to managerial positions.

Table 4: Comparing the attitudes toward the barriers between the two faculty members.

Variable	Levine test		t test for equality of variances						
	F	P	t	df	p	MD	SD	CI %95	
				Min Max					
Barriers to progress									
Equal variances	6.90	0.009	1.50	113	0.10	4.80	3.10	-1.30	10.90
Unequal variances			1.50	95.10	0.10	4.80	3.20	-1.50	11.10

The contents of table 4 show that there are no significant differences between the attitudes of women faculty members in both fields towards the barriers they face in their advancement in workplace. The calculated t=1.50 was not reported to be significant at the level of P<0.0.5.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Barriers to advancement, attitude toward work, and managerial skills are essential variables for women advancing to organizational leaderships. In order to advance to these positions, women need to improve their abilities to remove or minimize these barriers. So, this study investigated the possible variables that might be considered to be the major factors women are facing to advance their abilities to attain higher managerial positions.

The regression equations and the coefficients which were obtained from these equations show that the attitudes of managers toward women's work was the best variable that could predict the barriers to women's progress in managerial positions. These findings are similar and supported by the finding of some other researchers [1, 2, 4, 10, 13, 14]. These scholars show that due to traditional roles in managing family affairs which society has entrusted to women, managers feel that women don't have enough ability to handle managerial positions in organizations comparing with men. In other words, in the view of managers, environmental factors and cultural conditions are not ready for transferring management to women yet. In addition, they raise gender discrimination, women's responsibilities at home and house choir existence of invisible elements as a barrier to women progress in organizational positions. Zeher [4] examined the effective indicators in formation of glass ceiling (invisible barriers) in organizations. His results showed that among traditional dominance of men on official structure, promoting the culture of patriarchy, the power of men in organization, there is a direct relation with creating invisible variables. He believes that the glass ceiling barrier that women are facing and it prevents them from progressing in their workplace.

Subramanian et al. [9] concluded that the variables of family related barriers, negative stereotype, glass ceiling could predict barriers of managers' career progression in Malaysian women. Rassaei and Mohamadi [8] concluded that from the view of physical education faculty, there are many political- social obstacles that inhibited women to presence in sport stadiums. Pasque and Errington [11] reported that the reason of having not access of women to senior positions of decision making in higher education, is a continuing discrimination against women. The results of this study showed that women are facing discriminations which reduce their abilities to obtain senior positions of higher education. Cole [10] in his study concluded that male managers prefer men for higher occupational categories rather than women. Mathipa and Tsoka [5] investigated the possible barriers to the advancement of women to leadership positions in the educational profession. They reported that If the attitude of those in direct control of the education profession can be influenced and changed to be friendly and positively disposed toward the upward mobility of women in leadership positions, then, women could play a constructive part in improvement education "largely because of their role as mothers women have become the guarantors of a deep humanity, carrying a sense of community, of belonging, of selflessness and care". If women are assisted, encouraged, guided and appreciated, then they could blossom and also show vibrancy, curiosity, adventure and boldness never seen. As such, society is advised to adopt an attitude that believes in the dictum that says "whatever a man can do a woman can also do".

Based on the finding of this study and the results of others, it would be likely to recommend that there are several environmental elements and cultural conditions that despite women's capabilities, prevent them to achieve managerial positions. Such stereotype discriminations could also be seen in almost all communities. Findings of

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study showed that the work factor is a significant predictor for removing barriers to women's achieving managerial positions and playing role in decision makings. Therefore, perhaps it might be suggested that women should develop their abilities to remove such barriers by promoting their works and having more interaction with the conditions prevailing the organization. Then, there would be this possibility for them to succeed in removing these barriers.

A limitation of this study is that the results obtained could only be generalized only to the population under the investigation. Further similar studies using different variables are needed to study and predict other barriers of women advancement to managerial leadership and to improve the richness the findings of this study. Consequently, through advancing knowledge and understandings, scientific management methods could be improved to remove the barriers that women are experiencing in advancement to managerial positions.

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