

# Women Manager In Bahrain: Positive Steps Towards Gender Equality And Successful Careers

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to explore the career success of women managers in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The paper examines the interplay of cultural, national, and organizational factors in explaining individuals' experience of career success. The underlying reason for this research is that there is a gap in the knowledge, regarding the context of the Arab region as such issues are rarely tackled in this region, this paper hopes to fill the gap in the literature regarding the women managers careers experience and success in addition to the underlying reason for their experience. The method recommended for this research is semi-structured interviews that should be conducted with women from a multitude of echelons in management such as junior, senior and high management the interviews may last for 30 minutes to 90 minutes, moreover the interviews should be conduct in locations that are private or in accordance with the interviews preference to allow the interviews to speak freely about their experiences, interviews should be recoded and coded for research purposes. The findings of this paper indicate that women are likely to perceive themselves as successful in non-monetary terms such as balance between family and work in addition to colleague's respect and appreciation, furthermore, findings indicate that cultural, national, and organizational have an influential impact on women careers success and behaviors. This research hopes to augment this study as a platform for future researches, furthermore this research seeks to appeal for decision makers in the region in contemplation of realizing women potential in the workforce by eliminating cultural, national, and organizational that subliminally halt women progression and society development

## 1. Introduction

Although there are many studies have principally focused on western contexts, especially those involved in women careers experience, we know very little about the Bahraini and regional contexts (Xian and Woodhams, 2014). In addition, we could not find reliable studies that are related to Bahrain business community whereas they were outdated by now or quantitatively researched. The concept of women mangers experience of success in the workplace must be studied qualitatively whereas data about experience of real-life is gathered.

### 1.1. The Bahrain context

Responsively to the gap, this paper will explore the career success of women managers in a Bahraini context. It will focus on examining threefold factors that influence the experience of career success: cultural, national and organizational factors, representing the question: Are women managers' careers experience success in Bahrain or not? The placed null hypothesis for this research question: Women managers' careers do not experience success in Bahrain.

#### 1.1.1 Cultural factor

According to CTC (n.d.), women are the ones responsible for all domestic work in the usual. Women in strict families that have strong sense of traditions have restrictions from their husbands, should a women work, she must get permission from her life-partner. On the other hand, this phenomena is being erased due to the influencing attitudes of the outside world (S. 2016), and women are gradually entering the workforce and representing 32% in the private sector (SCW, 2016). This factor arises the following null hypothesis: Cultural factors do not influence the careers success of women managers' experience.

#### 1.1.2 National factor

According to Toumi, H. (2017) the Kingdom of Bahrain has reached another stage, progressing what beyond empowering women. Nowadays, women are allowed to participate unprompted in the real world. Both genders are equal in rights and offered the same opportunities nationally.

However, there are some differences on two levels: The competence and performance levels. This factor arises the following null hypothesis: National factors do not influence the careers success of women managers' experience.

#### 1.1.3 Organizational factor

According to Hawaldar, I., Kulal, L., Sison, S., & Joseph, N. (2016, January), women are motivated by their own having successful experience as employees in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Moreover, the team orientation and development are the utmost aspects that enhance individuals' performances. On the other hand, in the lack of a good total reward package based on positions will discourage them and change their behaviors and attitudes resulting in leaving their jobs putting organizations at risk. This factor arises the following null hypothesis: Organizational factors do not influence the careers success of women managers' experience.

## 2. Literature review

Masculine versus feminine societies:

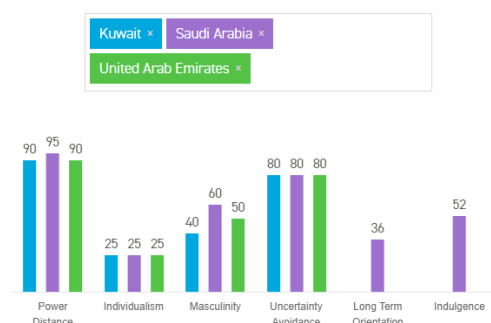


Figure 1: Masculinity versus femininity in the GCC countries

This graph shows that GCC countries are more lenient toward feminism as they score relatively low in masculinity related characteristics, which means that the people of these societies are more likely to be relationship oriented.

Moreover, they find people more important than money promotions and other aspects of objective success. In order to understand the cultural aspects of this research, we are going to break down the societal aspects according to Hofstede theory of Masculine versus Feminine societies (National Culture, n.d.).

### 2.1. Power distance

First, the power distance. This factor indicates the inequalities of society and how accepting is the society that some members have more power over other members. As the graph indicates that the GCC countries have a high score in the power distance factor as they are very accepting of hierarchy and power centralization without asking questions on how or why these people possess power which is why women are accepting of the patriarchal nature of this society as mentioned in (A.Tlaiss, H., 2013, & National Culture, n.d.).

### 2.2. Individualism/collectivism

The second factor is individualism which measures the level of independence among individuals in the society. It is related to how people define their self-image whether they like to use (I) or (we) whereas societies that are more on the individualism side of the spectrum only look after themselves and their direct family. However, on the other side of the spectrum, people are expected to belong to groups that will take care of them, in return they are expected to be loyal to said groups. Furthermore, figure 1 clarifies that all GCC countries score low on individualism, which means that the society is highly collective. This is reflected on society relationships, as individuals in such societies hold long-term relationships with family and friends in addition to extended family in high regard. Furthermore, this support that women in this region have a more subjective in their perspectives on success, as they often intertwine their success in work with balancing out family life and career goals in addition to employees love and respect (A.Tlaiss, H., 2013, & National Culture, n.d.).

### 2.3. Masculinity

The third factor is masculinity. It is a characteristic that indicates how much is the society driven by achievements and success. High score in this category means that the society is driven by a competitive mentality, that the winner is the best in the field. Additionally, these value systems start at early life stages such as school. This further reinforces A.Tlaiss' concept that Arab societies especially in the GCC countries, raise their kids on gender basis as women are raised to be communal and take care of the house hold, contrasting the men that are raised to be financially responsible and pursue an education and a job (National Culture, n.d.). Additionally, scoring low on the masculinity factor makes the society a feminist society. Meaning, that foremost the values of society encourage caring for others. Moreover, the quality of life in such societies is of higher importance than standing out and this is not admirable in such societies. In addition, managers try to find acceptance and approval from their subordinates. Furthermore, people in these communities value unity and solidarity in the workplace over competitiveness. Additionally, conflicts usually come to resolution via negotiation and compromises. Employees in such society favor incentives such as free time and work flexibility over monetary benefits. This builds as

evidence of A.Tlaiss research in which the researcher explored the concept that women have a different perspective on career success as the majority of the women managers interviewed in the research stated that their job financial compensation is lower than their male colleagues. However, they were happy and perceived themselves as successful because they were able to achieve the position of management and acquire a mutual respect relationship with their employees (National Culture, n.d.).

### 2.4. Uncertainty

The fourth factor is uncertainty. It is avoidance and it relates to how the society deals with an unknown future, should we try to shape the future or let life run its course. This ambiguity brings stress along with it and different societies learned to adapt and cope with it in different manners. As the graph indicates that the GCC countries score high on the uncertainty avoidance, hence there is a firm grip on traditions and beliefs in the region. This is further clarified by A.Tlaiss as the researcher attributed women career progression barriers to some of the traditions and cultural beliefs in the region. Those traditions and beliefs are very old and people held them as the orthodox way of life. An example of such belief is patriarchal household in which the male such as the husband or father is the leader and breadwinner. This also serves to explain why the citizens of the UAE viewed working women as a sign of financially struggling household (A.Tlaiss, H., 2013). Moreover, according to (A.Tlaiss, H., 2013) macro national factors such as culture and religion critically influence the meso-organizational culture, hence women are excluded from management meetings and social groups. That can help them develop in their careers because management positions are usually dominated by males. Additionally, the mixing of genders is harshly unacceptable in the GCC society. Moreover, historically leaders in this part of the world has always been males, which is why a female manager is looked at as unsafe or uncertain because it is in conflict with historical orthodox of the region (National Culture, n.d.).

### 2.5. Long-term orientation

The fifth factor is long-term orientation. This factor is related to how society maintains links to its own past while still moving forward. Further, to dealing with issues of the present day and the upcoming future. Different societies have different priorities for these goals. Moreover, normative societies seek to maintain old traditions and view societal change in a suspicious manner. However, the cultures with high score in long-term orientation lean toward a different perspective. As these cultures encourage economic life styles and endeavors in education as a method to prepare for the future. According to the graph, we only have data on Saudi Arabia and it represents a low score in this category showing the normative nature of the GCC. As the countries of the GCC region are very similar in culture and they share religion, language and beliefs (files. ethz., 2009), this low score is reflected across the GCC as a whole. A.Tlaiss supported this by saying that societal barriers hindering women progression in the career ladder is attributed to the perception of the women which is based on the normative view of society (National Culture, n.d.).

### 2.6. Relative deprivation theory

The relative deprivation theory states that a person will feel lacking in some aspects if he is compared to another. Moreover, the theory states that said person will feel entitled to what he is lacking if compared to others (Study.com, n.d.). This study builds on A.Tlaiss' research and give us a look on a possible outcome of the proposed research, which concludes that women in the GCC countries may feel deprived of their entitled rights and promotions in the workplace in comparison to their male counterparts with similar qualifications. This further clarifies why when A.Tlaiss interviewed subjects for similar research they were reluctant to say they are successful compared to males. However, when asked about their success in comparison to females they answered confidently they achieved success. They said they only achieved success because they were able to grasp the management position which solidify the fact that women in the GCC countries are deprived of such positions and they view these positions as rewards.

### 2.7. Subjective versus objective career success

According Abele, A. E., & Spurk, D, 2010, the career literature hints toward two main types of success: Firstly, the objective career success which illustrated in a vertical progress through the organizational ladder. Hence, this type of career success focus on achievements in the organization. Moreover, examples characteristics of success can be in the form of number of promotions, job title, and monetary compensation. Therefore, it is measured by purely objective terms, which as we established before, it is in conflict with the culture in the region according to (National Culture, n.d.). Additionally, the cultural aspect of this region lean toward life quality and value long term relationships over monetary aspects. Furthermore, this model is often criticized of being a western male model of career success and thus it is not suitable to accommodate the aspects of women careers success in addition to other minorities. Secondly, the subjective career success is measured by inner peace and satisfaction which are perceived individually and not restrained by the organizational aspects of the career. This only builds on the evidence of (National Culture, n.d.) as the GCC countries achieved a low score in the masculinity segment which means that the culture does not value competitiveness. On the contrary, it leans towards being communal and blending with the group. Furthermore, this establishes and strengthen the argument that women in the GCC review success in subjective terms as according to (A.Tlaiss, H., 2013), most women related their success to family balance and inner peace that is in addition to the satisfaction which is in line with the subjective career success model. Moreover, to further reinforce that the GCC societies do not value competitiveness and standing out as being the best in the field, most women expressed their success in a modest manner not viewing there self as exceptional or outstanding.

### 3. Conclusion

The primary research of this study was to explore the extent of the cultural, national, and organizational factors influencing women career success experience in the gulf region. The proposed findings and literature review indicate a substantial relationship between the aforementioned factors and women managers career experience. Moreover, the proposed findings support the research of (A.Tlaiss, H.,

2013) indicating that women managers experience of success are highly influenced by the mentioned factors.

### 4. Practical implementation

Advise decision-makers to adhere to this research proposal paper which is underlining the factors that make women careers experience successful. This research aids in imposing new laws to give women a chance in the workforce such as purely performance-based assessments for employees. In addition, impose new laws that combat cultural misconceptions that women are not suited for management positions. Furthermore, establish constant awareness programs for the general public.

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