

Assessing Factors that Prevent Female Students from Studying Hotel Management: A Case Study of the University of Jordan (Aqaba Branch)

Omar Jawabreh

Department of Hotel Management, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality

The University of Jordan

E-mail: o.jawabreh@ju.edu.jo

Bushra Alaqrarah

Department of Hotel Management, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality

The University of Jordan

Hossam Al Hrerat

Department of Hotel Management, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality

The University of Jordan

Ismail Al Shaabatat

Department of Hotel Management, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality

The University of Jordan

Qatada Al Jarah

Department of Hotel Management, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality

The University of Jordan

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Abstract

The participation of women in the hospitality industry is crucial. This research is conducted to explore factors that prevent female students from studying hotel management as a major at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality in the University of Jordan, located in Jordan. These factors include the financial aspects, cultural and social standpoints, religious perspective, and geographical reason. A total of 200 questionnaires containing 24 items was used to collect information from bachelor students at the University of Jordan-Aqaba. Results of the current study revealed that all the above barriers are applied to high levels in which the range of the mean score is 3.49-3.82. This study shall provide important feedback to decision-makers to encourage the female students further in studying hotel management degree specifically in Aqaba city.

Keywords: Hotel Management, Jordan, Financial Barriers, Cultural and Social Barriers, Religious Barriers, Geographical Barriers, Aqaba.



1. Introduction

Tourism is considered the most lucrative industry all over the world; it could be the first industry in a country or could be the second or the third largest industry in some countries (Fall, 2002). Tourism is recognized for development, economic progress, and revitalization; its fundamental contribution to the growth of the economy is one of the main reasons behind the interest of countries to develop and promote tourism attractions. It is considered as an increasing industry, its wealth could be redistributed to other sectors and destinations. It is a free trade without barriers, borders or restrictions; it depends mostly on natural infrastructure such as historical sites (Meehan, 2008; Sharpley, 2002). It has become a vital source of economic development (Hodur and Leistritz, 2006). Jordan is a small stable country in the Middle East but comparing to neighboring countries, Jordan suffers from the limitation of its mineral and water resources. Therefore, the government of Jordan has realized early the importance of tourism to support its economy. The revenue from tourism in 2008 accounted for 13 per cent of Jordan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) according to the statistics of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA). Jordan depends on the tourism industry as a source of employment. Meanwhile, the majority of employees are males and working in the hotel sector and female employees constitute around 10% of the labor force in the hotel sector and the majority of them are foreign female employees. Aqaba city is the second touristic destination in Jordan, there are 41 classified hotels and 2660 employees are working in these hotels; 1822 are Jordanian male employees and 59 Jordanian female employees, 692 are non-Jordanian male employees and 87 non-Jordanian female employees (MOTA, 2014).

Tourism services need qualified and skilled staff to present and delivered these services to the customers. Thus, the role of the universities, community colleges, and vocational training centers is magnificent in providing tourism sector with professional employees. There are 28 universities in Jordan, and it is considered a leader among Arab countries in education which plays a remarkable role in the progress and development of Jordan. Tourism and hospitality education also attracts the attention of both the private and public sector. According to the statistic of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (2015), the number of students enrolling tourism and hospitality colleges was 3125 in the three majors (Tourism Management, Hotel Management, Food and Beverage Management); among them, 1101 were female students. The least number of female students was in Hotel Management. The statistics also show that the number of students enrolling in Hotel Management Department at the University of Jordan\ Aqaba branch in 2015 was 66 among them were six female students while there were 44 female students in Food and Beverage Department out of 80 students and 58 female students in Travel and tourism department out 124 students (Alsarayreh, Abed Alqader, and Jawabreh, 2010; MOHESR, 2016).

Therefore, this study was conducted at the University of Jordan/ Aqaba branch to explore the reasons and factors that prevent female student from studying hotel management. In addition little research was conducting in this area such as (Alananzeh, 2014) who explored the factors that prevent students (male and female) from enrolling Tourism and Hospitality colleges, and the study of Alzou'bi and Alkharouf (2015) to assess students perceptions and attitudes towards women working in tourism sector, but no study was conducted to explore the factors



that hindering female students from enrolling hotel management department. The study aimed at assessing several factors from the point view of female students who are studying other majors at the University of Jordan regarding the factors that preventing them from studying hotel management, in addition, the study aimed at presenting recommendations for both the local community and tourism stakeholders about the importance of tourism especially hotel sector in providing females with permanent and lucrative jobs. The decision makers could benefit from the findings of this study to encourage local females to study hotel management and provide them with some applicable incentives that could attract them to this industry.

2. Literature Review

The hospitality industry is seen as a glamorous one on one side, while on the other it is deemed as being one of low skill, low status and low pay (Riley et al., 2002). There are reports that the sector has a particularly poor image in the eyes of hospitality students, which suggests that the industry may have greater difficulty attracting, recruiting and retaining quality staff (Jenkins, 2001). Eastern communities face a real shortage of female employees in tourism industry comparing to the western communities. Doherty (2004) pointed out that women in the UK hospitality industry make up 67 per cent of the work force in this sector; they conducted a study to explore the main barriers to women's progression to senior management and highlights the long hours associated with managerial roles as a major problem, the finding of the study showed differences between the rights of males and females.

Other researchers who focused on gender discrimination. Kim, Lee, and Chon (2008) identified the reasons why students in undergraduate and graduate level want to study tourism and hospitality management and their study revealed that students realized that working in tourism and hospitality jobs provide them with overseas experiences, self-actualization, and job opportunities. (Lashley, 1999) found that the vast majority of students who were recruited to a particular hospitality management programme in the UK displayed preferred learning styles which indicated they enjoy practical activity (Burke, Koyuncu, and Fiksenbaum, 2008) investigated gender differences in the work and career experiences of female and male managers and supervisors in the hospitality and tourism sector in Turkey. Maxwell, McDougall, and Blair (2000) insisted that regardless of governmental legislations of the equality of opportunities at work, there is still evidence of discrimination between women and men across the globe. The discrimination in work place could be connected with women's notion and culture of job opportunities. Women in some societies are still shy of working in hotel sectors and or still thinking that the man is the dominant or they fear that they will stagnate in lower management positions (Hackett, 1981). Mooney and Ryan (2009) pointed out that women are treated unequally as men regarding career positions in hotels. Social factors also impact women work and career promotion in hotel sectors (Burke, 2005).

2.1 The Jordanian Context

Jordan depends on the tourism industry as one of the main resources to improve their balance of payments condition (Bazazo, Alananzeh, and Taani, 2016). Recently, this sector has



witnessed a great change in the infrastructure development (Bazazo and Alananzeh, 2016; Alshawagfih, Alananzeh, and Jawabreh, 2015) number of foreign investment (Alananzeh, Mahmoud, and Ahmed, 2015, Jawabreh, Alananzeh, and Shatnawi, 2015), and the priority in national strategies for public and private organizations (Bazazo et al., 2016; Al-Hussein et al., 2014; Chiu and Alananzeh, 2012a; Chiu and Alananzeh, 2012b). Obviously, these studies and others are going around the rights of women in senior jobs in hotels. On the contrary, this study is trying to explore the reasons and factors that prevent female students from joining hotel management majors in postgraduate studies. Even modern studies have approved that there is no discrimination in recent years regarding gender in hotel positions (Burke, Koyuncu and Fiksenbaum, 2008). Jordan also gives women the same opportunities as for men in all sectors even in the private sector. In tourism industry especially in Aqaba city which is crowded by hotels, we can see that women have occupied senior positions in the hotel sector. Al-saman (2002) showed that women in Jordan realize that working in the tourism sector is very profitable. Thus, several studies were conducted to explore the reasons behind the enrollment of Jordanian women in tourism industries. In 1997, a survey study done by the Vocationational Training Institution to determine the training program need in force market and the employment of women, the study revealed that women refuse to work due to the lack of facilities presents to them by stakeholders. The survey also revealed that a large number of women are working tourism industry in Amman, the capital city of Jordan, but other regions in Jordan are still suffering from a shortage in work forces which is around 73.3% employment capacity. Whereas Magableh (2000) stated that the reasons behind the little involvement of women in tourism services in Jordan are due to culture and traditions which prevents women from working long hours beside working at night in the hotel where alcoholic drinks are served which is against Islamic principles and norms, in addition, the women's role as household and their lack of experience in hotel services. The social and cultural factors affecting on students the choice to enroll hospitality studies (Alananzeh, 2014). Magableh (2005) shed lights on the positive advantages of working in the tourism industry as perceived by Jordanian women, they study showed that women truly realize that there are some positive advantages like meeting new people, knowing other cultures, self-fulfillment, and the ease and enjoyment of tourism jobs.

2.2 The Barriers and Obstacles

Hotel education for women helps them to increase their participation in the labor markets (Hotel) and increase their family income, which benefits the whole community and releases the stress on employment demand. Thus, working in hotel sector has a positive income on per capita income and since the woman is part of this community, working in hotels will grantee her and her family a better life. Magableh (2000) stated that traditions and cultures are preventing women from working for long hours. In additions, community abhorrences women from working in places where the alcoholic is served which violate Islamic teachings and principles. He also postulated that women's lack of practical experiences and scientific qualifications is the most important barrier that hinders women from working in the hospitality sector. Women as well feel that they do not have a clear job description or adequate promotion opportunities. Whereas, (Alananzeh, 2017; Al-saman (2002) claimed that



tourism is affected by the surrounding political events and that may cause hospitality properties to face hard times and which may lead to the lack of employments or late payment of salaries. Meanwhile, Al-Zou'by and Alkharouf (2015) mentioned some more obstacles that prevent women from joining hospitality jobs; these are the community conservation regarding women's travel for the purpose of work; the tradition and cultures refuses the woman to stay late in her job or office; some jobs in tourism as opposed to the religious beliefs; the difficulty of reconciling between home duties and job duties; the possibility of being exposed to sexual harassment in her work places, and finally women believe that those who are working in hospitality sector may not get an opportunity for marriage or get it late because of the community attitude towards such women.

3. Research Methodology

This section provides the methodology applied in the current study. It consists of the research operational definitions of the study's variables, besides data collection tool and research population and sample.

3.1. Research Operational Definitions

The current research considers four barriers prevent female students from studying hotel management as a major in the faculties of tourism and hospitality. These factors include the financial aspects, cultural and social standpoints, religious perspective, and geographical reason; which were measured in the research questionnaire through five, nine, five, and five items respectively.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The targeted population is defined as all individuals or items that are suffering from the same problem of the study or is related to it (Al-Zou'by and Alkharouf, 2015). Thus, the population of this study is the girl students / Agaba branch of the University of Jordan in five colleges; College of Business Administration, Faculty of Languages, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Information Technology as these disciplines commensurate with the work in the tourism sector. According to the registration department database for the academic year 2015/2016, the University of Jordan- Agaba branch, the number of girl students in these five colleges consisted of 530 and distribution of the number of the girls according to each college was almost closed, and according to Morgan Table data, 214 respondents should be reached as the size of statistical sample of this research (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). However, 209 survey questionnaires were returned from respondents and considered 200 after eliminating the incomplete ones. The primary data was collected through a drop-and-collect survey technique. The surveys were distributed to the students in their classes and collected after each class ended. The questionnaire consisted of two sections; the first section in questionnaire presents general personal information about a respondent, the University Stage, College, Major, Household Income, academic level for your father, academic level for your Mother and Original Place of Residence. The second section includes a descriptive Analysis of questions to measure the variables based on their operational definitions.



4. Data Analysis and Results

In order to explore the degree to which female students face barriers that put off them from studying hotel management as a major in tourism and hospitality sectors at the University of Jordan / Aqaba branch, in which the items for these barriers have been measured using 5-points Likert scale that varies between strongly disagree =1, and strongly agree =5; reliability and validity analyses were conducted, descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristic of sample and the respondents to the items of the questionnaire.

4.1. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two important measures to determine the quality and usefulness of the primary data. Validity is about accuracy and whether the instrument measures what it is intended to measure while reliability is about precision; it is used to check the consistency and stability of the questionnaire. Indeed, the researchers depended on scales and items that were previously developed and used by other researchers with similar interest. Also, a draft of the questionnaire was formulated, and then it was reviewed by four academic lecturers—who have a sufficient knowledge and experience in this scope- to ensure that each item is measuring what is intended to be measured and to avoid the ambiguity and complexity in the phrasing of questions. The reliability of the instrument was measured by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Further, some scholars (e.g. Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Creswell, 2009) suggested that the values of all indicators or dimensional scales should be above the recommended value of 0.60. Table (1) represents the results of Cranach's alpha for the study barriers. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all the tested variables are above 0.60 which suggesting the composite measure is reliable.

Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of study variables/ barriers

Variables/ Barriers	Number of items	Cronbach
		alpha
Financial Barriers	5	0.762
Cultural and Social Barriers	9	0.827
Religious Barriers	5	0.744
Geographical Barriers	5	0.734

4.2. Respondents Demographic Profile

As indicated in Table (2), the demographic profile of the respondents for this study showed that they originally from Aqaba; most of them in their fourth year study; the majorities from the college of Management and Finance, and Tourism and Hospitality respectively; and most of their household income more than 1000 \$ a month.



Table 2. Description of the respondents' demographic profiles

Category	Category	Frequency	Percentage%
University stage	First Year	43	21.5
	Second Year	39	19.5
	Third Year	54	27.0
	Fourth Year	64	32.0
	Total	200	100
College	Management and Finance	81	40.5
	Information Technology	16	8.0
	Tourism and Hospitality	64	32.0
	Languages	39	19.5
	Total	200	100
Major	English Language	21	10.5
	French Language	15	7.5
	Arabic Language	3	1.5
	Tourism & Travel	33	16.5
	Management		
	Hotel Management	12	6.0
	Food & Beverage	19	9.5
	Management		
	Computer Information	3	1.5
	Systems		
	Business Information	13	6.5
	Technology		
	Accounting	32	16
	Business Administration	26	13
	Rist Management &	23	11.5
	Insurance		
	Total	200	100
Household	Less than 450 \$	18	9.0
income (\$ per	450- less than 700 \$	41	20.5
month)	700- less than 1000 \$	39	19.5
	More than 1000 \$	102	51.0
	Total	200	100
The academic	High School Level or Less	89	44.5
level for the	Diploma	54	27.0
student's father	Bachelor	50	25.0
	Master	5	2.5
	Doctorate	2	1.0
	Total	200	100
The academic	High School Level or Less	65	32.5
level for the	Diploma	49	24.5



student's mother	Bachelor	74	37.0
	Master	10	5.0
	Doctorate	2	1.0
	Total	200	100
Original place	Irbid	10	5.0
of residency	Amman	31	15.5
	Aqaba	121	60.5
	Ajlun	7	3.5
	Al-Karak	15	7.5
	Tafiela	9	4.5
	Jarash	0	0
	Ma'an	4	2.0
	Al-Balqa	1	0.5
	Al-Zarqa	1	0.5
	Madaba	1	0.5
	Al-Mafraq	0	0
	Total	200	100

4.3. Descriptive Analysis

In order to describe the responses and thus the attitude of the respondents toward each question, they were asked in the survey, the mean and the standard deviation were estimated. While the mean shows the central tendency of the data, the standard deviation measures the dispersion which offers an index of the spread or variability in the data (Pallant, 2005; Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). In other words, a small standard deviation for a set of values reveals that these values are clustered closely about the mean or located close to it; a large standard deviation indicates the opposite. The level of each item was determined by the following formula: (highest point in Likert scale - lowest point in Likert scale) / the number of the levels used = (5-1) / 5 = 0.80, where 1-1.80 reflected by "very low", 1.81-2.60 reflected by "low", 2.61-3.40 reflected by "moderate", 3.41-4.20 reflected by "high", and 4.21-5 reflected by "very high". Then the items were being ordered based on their means. Tables (3) and (4) show the results.

Table 3. Overall mean and standard deviation of the study's variables

Type of Variable/ Barrier	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level	Order
Financial Barriers	3.4950	0.88968	High	4
Cultural and Social Barriers	3.7344	0.69632	High	3
Religious Barriers	3.8200	0.84259	High	1
Geographical Barriers	3.7600	0.76006	High	2

As presented in Table (3), data analysis results have shown that barriers face female students from studying hotel management as a major in the faculties of tourism and hospitality are applied to high levels in which the range of the mean score are 3.4950-3.8200. Table (4)



demonstrates the mean, standard deviation, level, and order scores for items for each variable/barrier.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of the study's variables

Financial Barriers	Mean	SD	Level	Or der
The family's low standard of living to study Hotel Management as a major	3.42	1.339	High	3
The difficulty of finding a job after graduation from the university majoring in Hotel Management	3.52	1.232	High	2
Few programs that highlight the importance of women's work in the tourism sector	3.89	1.021	High	1
High standard of living in Aqaba prevents me from coming to study Hotel Management	3.25	1.329	Moder ate	5
The low salary that a girl could achieve in tourism sector comparing to other companies and institutions	3.41	1.268	High	4
Cultural and Social Barriers	Mean	SD	Level	Or der
The community is conservative regarding women's travel for the purposes of hotel working	4.09	0.976	High	1
The spread of the culture of shame in the community regarding women's work in tourism and hotel sector	3.90	1.039	High	3
The community is conservative regarding women's going out late for the purposes of hotel work	4.01	1.049	High	2
The difficulty of performing social duties for women working in the hotel sector	3.56	1.031	High	8
The difficulty of securing children for women working in hotel sector	3.57	1.123	High	7
The limited of tourism professions that the society allows women to work in	3.65	1.012	High	5
The difficulty of performing home duties for women working in hotel sector	3.46	1.198	High	9
The society imposes limited field in hotel sector for the women in	3.60	1.075	High	6
The community is conservative regarding women's work in mixed places such as hotels	3.80	1.157	High	4
Religious Barriers	Mean	SD	Level	Or der
The rejection of Islam regarding girl's mixing with males from different nationalities	3.75	1.276	High	4
Religious teachings reject the work of girls in a hotel that offers alcoholic beverages	3.99	1.136	High	1
Religion does not allow girls to be in the places of their	3.97	1.120	High	2



work for hours late at night				
Religion stands negatively against women working in the	3.58	1.233	High	5
tourism and hospitality sector				
Most businesses prefer men rather than women for	3.82	1.223	High	3
religious reasons				
Geographical Barriers	Mean	SD	Level	Or
				der
The availability of Hotel Management Programs	3.87	1.118	High	1
(Bachelor's) in a limited Jordanian universities in some				
provinces				
The lack of postgrduate programs in Hotel Management	3.75	1.079	High	4
in the Jordanian universities				
Girl students hate and refuse to stay away from their	3.66	1.115	High	5
families to study Hotel Management specialization				
Hotel facilities are concentrated in a specific geographic	3.77	1.066	High	2
area (Amman, Aqaba, Wadi Musa, the Dead Sea)				
There is a large number of hotel facilities located in	3.76	1.081	High	3
isolated geographic areas like (Aqaba, Wadi Musa, the				
Dead Sea)				

5. Conclusions

Since the hotel management major was officially launched in the University of Jordan-Aqaba branch in 2009, but up to this year, 2016, only six female students have joined this bachelor program. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the factors or barriers that prevent female students from studying hotel management as a major at the faculty of tourism and hospitality. Several factors were suggested in the Jordanian community context. These factors include the financial aspects, cultural and social standpoints, religious perspective, and geographical reason. Elder women are blocked from the promotion in their career development in the hotel industry, (Yun Yang, 2011). Women employees have to face "Gender Segregation" in their career development, which is described as a "glass ceiling" vividly or "horizontal sex segregation" (Anker, 2004). Low-level education is often considered as one of the main obstacles for the promotion of women (Bullard, Wright's, 1993; Schruijer, 2006).

Results revealed that the religious barrier was ranked as the first barrier that hinders female students from joining hotel management program. Women still believe that Religious teachings reject the work of girls in a hotel that offers alcoholic beverages. The community still refuses women to stay late at night in their work. Also, people still believe Islam rejects the girl's mixing with others especially males from different nationalities, but they have to understand that Islam has clear fair principles and regulations regarding females dealing with others in presenting services and doing jobs. Therefore, business prefers men over women in order to avoid the shortage in the workforce at their hotel. It is the duty of the public and private sector, the Ministry of Education and other social societies to clarify the Islamic attitude towards women's employment in public jobs.



The findings of the study showed that the geographic factor has shown the second as the most important factor which affects on girls in enrolling Hotel Management Department at the University of Jordan / Aqaba Branch. Female students referred this to the shortage of this major to some provinces in Jordan. Then the other obstacle is that hotel facility are concentrated in a specific geographic area (Amman, Aqaba, Wadi Musa, the Dead Sea) where the population density is very low except for Amman where there is no such major. Whereas, Aqaba, Wadi Rum, and the Dead Sea are considered isolated areas. The lack of a postgraduate program for Hotel management in Jordan also hindered female students from joining bachelor program, in addition, girl students hate and refuse to stay away from their families to study hotel management specialization. We recommend that the government and the university should provide facilities devoted for girl students to overcome the difficulties and change their attitudes towards joining such major in the isolated provinces such as Aqaba. In addition, we recommend the University of Jordan in Amman to start a postgraduate program in hotel management as soon as possible.

The cultural and social factor is the third factor that affects the lack of girls to joining hotel management at the University of Jordan/Aqaba Branch. The results showed that the community is conservative regarding women's travel for the purposes of hotel working and going out late for the purposes of hotel work. Most parts of the community still have the notion of shame regarding women's work in tourism and hotel sector or mixing with strange people. Indeed, several researchers consider the information systems and in particular the Information Technology (IT) and Knowledge Management (KM) systems as an enabler to achieve the desired competitive advantages, and as a crucial support to operational and strategic business decisions (Alshurideh and Alkurdi, 2012; Hajir et al., 2015; Masa'deh et al., 2012-2017); consequently, further research is required to examine the presence of special awareness programs regarding such cultural obstacles. In addition to the limited profession offered for women in hotels or the difficulties the married women working in hotels to secure their kids during hours-work or the difficulty of performing social duties for women working in the hotel sector.

The financial barrier was shown to be forth barrier from the point of view of the university' girl students. They claimed that few programs that highlight the importance of women's work in the tourism sector. There are reports that the sector has a particularly poor image in the eyes of hospitality students, which suggests that the industry may have greater difficulty attracting, recruiting and retaining quality staff (Jenkins, 2001). Other maintained that there is the difficulty of finding a job after graduation from the university majoring in hotel management or they will get a low salary in hotels. Whereas, other students stated that high standard of living in Aqaba prevents them from coming to study hotel management.

This study shall provide important feedback to decision-makers to encourage the female students further in studying hotel management degree specifically in Aqaba city. They should work on empowering women to hold senior leadership positions in tourism and Hotel industry. They should raise the awareness regarding our customs, traditions, cultures and social practices that devoted stereotype towards women work in hotels and educating women about their rights. Create advanced training centers specialized in tourism professions to



qualify women to enter the tourism labor market. We also recommend that educational institution should launch awareness campaigns to shed light on the importance of tourism industry and the role of women in this sector. The university of Jordan should adopt policies and strategies to attract girl students to study hotel management and to be a pioneer in such major.

Studying and working in hospitality is restricted by the Islamic values. The Islamic Personal Law affects women's participation in working forces in the Arabian societies (karnen, 1996; kazimi,2000).

In the Middle East, some studies indicated that most countries one ruled diversely by the Islamic law, some writers pointed out that these rules especially inheritance, children custody rights and divorce distinguish between the two genders.

Kazimi mentioned that some religious rules are immutable to be changed to equalize both male and female in some laws (Kazimi, 2000).

The attitude toward women's study and work) mainly and diversely depends on religion and tribal traditions which have a notable effect on types of jobs women have in different economic fields. For example, the parental authority i.e, the father's dominating role, is a key aspect in the Middle East societies, moreover, this attitude changes quietly into the equality between genders regarding studying and working in hospitality.

Consequently, women may face many religious, cultural, and social restrictions in studying and working in hospitality fields. Experimental studies, therefore, should highlight these restrictions mainly when the Arabian women, such as Saudi women after the vision of K.S.A in 2030, enter the hospitality business.

The researcher believes that the increasing number of educated and employed women may derestrict the religious, cultural, and social limits. It's worth to mention that these issues need to be studied particularly in both conservative and open societies.

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