

Roles of Organizational Cultural, Networks, Interpersonal Relationships, and Leadership Challenges: An Empirical Investigation of Women in Management

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Abstract

The presence of women in workplace has increased in last decades surrounded by leadership challenges that negatively marked their progress. The aims of the current work are to examine the research gap on Jordanian female managers and to investigate the challenges that women encounter in private and public sectors. Further, this work also investigates the effects of organizational culture, networks, and interpersonal relationships on the leadership challenges

that women face in the Jordanian workplace. The current work employed quantitative methods to gather accessible data from the sample of the study. Measures used in this study are demographic characteristics, leadership challenges, organizational cultural, networks, and interpersonal relationships. Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach as a statistical method was used to analyze the data. Results indicated that the most leadership challenges faced by women are organizational networks and interpersonal relationships. Further, results of PLS showed that significant and positive effects carried out by organizational networks and interpersonal relationships and organizational culture on leadership challenges. Practical implications and recommendations for future research are presented and discussed.

Keywords: Organizational cultural, Leadership challenges, Interpersonal relationships, Arab women in management

1. Introduction

The increasing enrolment of women at all levels in various aspects of life in Jordan, especially in leadership position, has resulted in the need of understanding the challenges encountered by these women and how these challenges are related to other variables. This study focuses on challenges facing business women leaders — an issue that lacks researchers' attention, especially in Arab countries (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Furthermore, it has been reported that challenges encountered by female Arab managers in Middle Easter and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have not addressed adequately. For example, Al-Lamky (2007) reviewed some studies that have examined challenges and stated that “most of these studies are conducted in western societies which are not necessarily generalizable to other cultures despite their apparent value” (p. 53). She has also pointed out that there is a dearth of research on the experience of Arab women in leadership positions where women have possessed positions in top management in various fields of life.

Thus, this paper reports a study that addresses the challenges faced by the Jordanian female business women. Specifically, the study attempts to examine the role of women in Arab countries that has changed dramatically in the past decade (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Considering women in leadership positions in these countries, it has been reported that they encounter various types of leadership challenges (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). These challenges are faced by the Arab women in various employment sectors in these countries. However, the concern of this study is the challenges faced by Jordanian women in only one employment sector which is business.

This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the most and the least leadership challenges Jordanian women encounter in workplace?

RQ2: What are the effects of organizations culture, networks and interpersonal relationships on these leadership challenges?

1.1 Literature Review

This section deals with literature review. It starts with a description of the status of women in the Arab World. This is followed by a review of previous studies that have examined issues related to challenges facing women in workplace in some Arab countries.

1.1.1 Women in the Arab World

The status and role of women in Arab countries, especially those in the Middle East and GCC countries, are influenced by various factors that are related to religion, culture and society's tradition. However, the role of women in Arab countries has changed remarkably in the last two decades. This was a result of the fact that the proportion of women attending schools, attending universities and obtaining doctorate degrees has witnessed a recognizable increase in recent decades. Although the attitude towards women in general in Arab countries has been criticized due to the inequality view of women in this region, education, globalization, technological advancement, the intellectual development, and the influence of Western

civilizations have forced people in Arab countries to change this attitude. Regarding this, Metcalfe (2011) referred to United Nations (UN) and World Economic Forum (WEF) that have highlighted the importance of the empowerment of women in Gulf countries for future competitive development. Furthermore, the calls for the need to give women in Arab countries rights to be involved in various sectors of life and for the significance of making women active participants in political process and economic fields have also contributed to the current attitude societies have towards women in Arab countries. As a result of this, there has been an increase in the percentage of women in a range of sectors in Arab societies. Al-Yousef (2009) discussed with visual representation the women participation in economic activities and reported that women participation in economic and business sectors in Arab countries is 25%. Currently, the existence of Arab women in parliaments and governments is obviously noticed, with some women in ministerial positions in some countries. Moreover, Arab spring which is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests riots (Dator, Sweeney, & Yee, 2014), resulting in civil wars and chaotic life in Libya and Yemen (Fraihat, 2016), is an emergent factor that can be associated with the change in the general attitude towards women in Arab countries.

Currently, women in Arab countries possess good levels of education, with high rates of enrolment in schools, universities and workplace. Furthermore, women in Arab countries take managerial positions in business and management. However, some studies have shown that there are various barriers that hinder women in leadership positions in Arab countries (Scott - Jackson, Kariem, Porteous, & Harb, 2010). Furthermore, countries in the Arab region have witnessed a rise of women to lower-level and mid-level management positions with a noticeable increase of women reaching top management positions in some sectors of workplace (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010).

An important issue that should be considered while embarking a study on the challenges facing women leaders in Arab countries is gender. Most countries show gender gaps in factors that are important for entrepreneurship, such as the access to money and availability of training to set up a business. However, evidence from the new Facebook-OECD-World Bank business survey suggests that “once passed the barriers to create a business, women feel as confident as men about their enterprise” (OCDE, 2016, p. 8).

1.1.2 Related Studies

Although there are a plethora of research on challenges encountered by women in various fields of workplace, most of these studies have been conducted in Western contexts. Since this study is concerned about the challenges facing women leaders in Jordan, the studies reviewed here will mostly focus on studies conducted in the Arab world, especially countries in the Middle East and GCC.

One of the early studies that have tackled the issue of attitudes towards women in Arab countries is (Abdalla, 1996) who examined freshman year college students’ attitudes towards women working in a traditionally man-dominant jobs (medical doctors, bankers, computer analysts, managers and accounts). Although her study did not examine challenges facing women in workplace in the Arab context, her study has so far attracted researchers to focus

on various obstacles faced by Arab women in workplace. She concluded that the various traditional roles that are related to women's rights, responsibilities and roles stood as restrictive matters that did not allow women in Arab countries to exist in more positions in workplace.

Some studies have dealt with challenges preventing female managers to ascend to top positions in management. Two of these studies are (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005), (Kattara, 2005), (Al-Lamky, 2007), and (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). While Jamali, et al., (2005) and Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) focused on constraints as perceived by Lebanese women managers in some occupation fields. Kattara (2005) focused on career challenges encountered by female managers in hotels in Egypt, whereas Al-Lamky (2007) examined challenges encountered by Arab women managers in Oman. Jamali et al. (2005) intended to assess constraints faced by Lebanese women managers. Employing interview, they collected data from 52 Lebanese female managers and found that constraints facing Lebanese female managers can be classified into three main categories: socio-cultural aspects (cultural variables), corporate environment (stereotypical attitudes towards women and family and domestic commitments) and the structural constraints (exclusion from formal and informal network, absence of relevant benefits, and developmental assignments designed exclusively for male managers). The other study that was conducted in Lebanon is Tlaiss and Kauser (2010). Taking into account the importance of understanding organizational barriers hindering female managers in Arab countries from progression in their careers, Tlaiss and Kauser explored Lebanese female managers' perception of barriers deemed crucial for their career development within their organizations. They found that Lebanese female managers' career evolution of is prevented by the organizational practices and structures that may control women in workplace. Their study also revealed that the cultural factors and practices of their organizations may be some of several obstacles that prevent women's progression.

Kattara (2005) examined female hotels managers' perceptions of their positions and challenges preventing them from rising to the top of management pyramid. Using an adapted questionnaire, Kattara collected data from 56 female managers in five-star hotels concerning their personal information and experience in managerial positions. It is important to mention that the challenges Kattara focused on in the questionnaire were gender stereotyping, gender discrimination, network access, work-family conflict, cultural barriers, mentor support, family support, relationships at work, and existence of the glass ceiling. She reported that the major challenges that prevented female managers from reaching higher positions were female managers' relationships with others at work and gender stereotyping, cultural conflict, gender discrimination and the conflict between work and family. Another important finding is that family support and mentor support were not identified as barriers preventing them from advancements. Al-Lamky (2007) has examined experience of and challenges encountered by Arab women managers. However, Al-Lamky interviewed Omani women managers in not only one field. Rather, she selected the participants from fields of education, social development, economy, foreign affairs, academic and government. Although she focused on other issues, the main concern was what Omani female managers reported regarding the challenges they faced. Al-Lamky reported that the major challenges were lack of policies and

procedures for incorporation of gender goals and the traditional restrictive attitudes towards women. Thompson (2015) discussed how Saudi women leaders confront the new challenges and opportunities available to them, and discusses that their work performance is under constant scrutiny. Kattan (2016) have also suggested that Saudi women face sexual segregation in a frontline leadership position

Most of the studies that have been conducted on challenges facing women in workplace were carried out in Saudi Arabia. This can be due to some distinctive features of Saudi Arabia as an important and active leader among Islamic countries. Furthermore, Al-Ahmadi (2011) has noticed that the workplace environment in Saudi Arabia differs from working environments in other Arab countries due to changes in the presence of women in the last two decades and the gender-based segregation in a range of aspects of workplace in the country. Al-Ahmadi (2011) examined the challenges encountered by 160 women Saudi leaders. Using a questionnaire, Al-Ahmadi examined challenges (structural challenges, lack of empowerment, cultural challenges, personal challenges and challenges related to lack of resources) facing women leaders in Saudi Arabia and how these challenges differ across demographic variables (personal and professional characteristics, level of education, specialization, years of working experience and years of experience in administrative work, job title, marital status and age). She found that the main challenges for women leaders in Saudi Arabia were structural challenges, lack of resources and lack of empowerment. However, she reported that cultural and personal challenges were not found to be major challenges. No significant differences were observed in terms of years of work experience or management experience. She concluded that the significant differences in personal challenges were identified according to level of education. In another study, Zamberi (2011) reported that gender and regulatory environment were considered to be the major challenges for female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. Zamberi pointed out that unclear regulations and policies, gender issues in social and regulatory interactions, extra restrictions and requirements imposed on businesswomen are the major obstacles for female entrepreneurs' progression in their businesses. Danish and Smith (2012) focused on the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. They also examined how the government and NGOs could help Saudi women establish and sustain a small to medium entrepreneurs. They reported that the challenges associated with gender are financial management and resources, leadership and management skills, and understanding competition and market. Their results showed that the respondents' major challenges that would be critical in the future conduct of business were related to technological resources, financial rules and regulation associated with business expansion, business networking, high efficiency and productivity, managing competition, and professional staff. Two recent studies have focused on challenges facing women leaders in Saudi Arabia are (Al-kayed, 2015) and (Al-Ghamri, 2016). Al-kayed (2015) investigated leadership challenges encountered by women in public universities in Saudi Arabia. Using in-depth interviews with nineteen female leaders in public universities, Al-kayed focused on female leaders' satisfaction with work, roles as wives and managers and found that the most critical challenges were the long working hours, dealing with different natures of subordinates, and lack of authorization. Al-Ghamri (2016) used a 45-item questionnaire to identify challenges facing Saudi businesswomen (social and economic constraints,

discrimination and infrastructure) and reported that family constraints were found to be the major challenges.

In the Jordanian context, there is scarcity of studies focusing on challenges facing women leaders. Zubaidi, Al-Sammerai, and Ahmad (2011) provided overview of leadership challenges and have argued how the Jordanian government takes the responsibility to encourage and support the leadership of women in a range of aspects of life including business, management, politics and society. The authors depended on studies conducted in Western contexts to discuss the factors that contribute to the challenges of women leaders. Thus, it is difficult to generalize findings of studies conducted in Western contexts to women leaders in Arab countries due to the interaction among complex factors such as educational background and the structures of the societies in Arab countries. Taking the importance of the role of women as an active participant in academic leadership, researchers have examined the challenges faced by women in educational leaderships. For example, in the educational context in Jordan, (Al-Jaradat, 2014) explored the challenges encountered by 187 women leaders in the field of education. He used a questionnaire consisting of 49 items covering four domains which are organizational, personal, social and physical challenges. They reported that the physical and organizational challenges represent the highest degrees of challenges facing women leaders in Jordan. An important finding of the study is that there was no significant relationship between challenges facing women academic leaders and other variables which were job title, academic degree and years of experience.

To sum up, it can be concluded that much work has been carried out on aspects that are related to the challenges of women leaders in business and management sectors. Yet, little attention has been given to how variables such as organizational culture, organizational networks and interpersonal relationships are related to challenges faced by women business leaders. Although Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) claimed that female managers in Arab countries encounter similar difficulties, it is very difficult to give generalizations due to cultural variables and differences in traditional norms in Arab countries. This literature review has confirmed that women managers in Arab countries encounter barriers that are associated with cultures that may hinder effective interaction, progression in careers, and networking. Regarding this, Jamali, et al., (2005) pointed out that several organizations have a strong masculine culture that negatively affect structural arrangements. It is worthy to point out that studies that have been conducted in Arab countries to examine challenges encountered by female managers may not be generalizable to the Jordanian context. Taking this into consideration, there is a need to investigate how earlier reported challenges faced by female managers in Arab countries can appear in the Jordanian workplace context and how these challenges can be connected to other variables.

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Research design

This research employed a quantitative approach to investigate the proposed research questions earlier because the use of quantitative methods depends on probability theory to reach a decision after testing the statistical hypotheses of the study. Further, quantitative

methods can be deductive which can provide insights of possible generalizations to the population under the study (Harwell, 2011). The measurement tool used in this quantitative study is printed survey. The reason behind employing this type of data collection method is that it facilitates gathering large amount of data in a short time (Sekaran, 2006). Printed survey as a data collection method was preferred over online one for two reasons. First, the Internet connectivity in the context of the study is problematic. Second, most of the respondents in some public and private organizations do not have email addresses. Thus, printed survey was carried out as data collection method to gather data from respondents at their own pace, time, and preferences (Sekaran, 2006).

2.1.2 Research setting and sample

This study was carried out in Amman, the metropolis of Jordan. The population of the current study is women leaders and this particular population was chosen due to the dearth of information and empirical examinations of the challenges they encounter in their workplace. Further, there are no public available database or government sources on females at work in Jordan. This problem is spread over countries in the Middle East such as Lebanon (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010) and Saudi Arabia (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). For a technical side, mailing surveys is unreliable due to unreliable postal system and cost. Additionally, Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) criticized the relationship nature between researchers and organizations, stating that researchers face difficulties in getting access to employees in public and private sectors, specially female respondents. Due to the former notions, we have to build mutual trust with key personal in Human Resources departments to overcome low response rate and difficulties to getting access to the population under the study. Thus, a convenience sampling technique was used instead of the conventional sampling (Bernard, 2012).

Data collection was conducted in September 2016. A research assistant administrated the survey to multiple informants and HR personals, informed them about the nature of the study, and explained its aims to them. Additional copies of the survey were provided to the participants who, in turn, administered them to some co-workers. Thus, a printed survey was administrated to 887 respondents and the total returned usable responses were 409 with a response rate of 46%.

2.2 Measures

The measurement instruments used in this study consists of several scales based on previous literature and studies conducted on women in workplace in the Arab context. Demographic variables, the first section, deals with the type of the sector (i.e. private or public), age, work experience, marital status, education, years in managerial position, language, and professional development courses. In this scale, a variety of two- and more item measures were used. For example, age was scaled on five options starting from less than 30 to more than 51 years.

In the second section of the questionnaire, two aspects of the organizational factors were examined. Participants were requested to indicate their degree of disagreement or agreement with the statements using a point-five Likert scale ranging from 1 being strongly agree to 5 being strongly disagree. Organizational culture was assessed with a nine-item scale from

Bergman and Hallberg's (2002) Women Workplace Culture Questionnaire (WWQ). This scale was used in the Arab context and achieved good reliability ($\alpha = 0.67$) (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). Negative items were identified and only one was re-coded during data analysis procedures. The item was "negative perceptions and stereotypes about women's commitment to work constitute barriers to women's advancement". Organizational networks and interpersonal relationships was assessed by seven items from Tlaiss and Kauser (2010). This scale was used in previous studies in the Arab context and achieved good reliability ($\alpha = 0.72$).

The third section in the questionnaire incorporated leadership challenges from Al-Ahmadi (2011) and was assessed by thirty-six items. These items were grouped into five subscales: structural challenges, personal challenges, lack of empowerment, lack of resources and cultural challenges. Similarly to other scales used in this study, this scale was used before in the Arab context and achieved very good reliability ($\alpha = 0.88$). All the tools used to gather the data in the current study were undergone a multiple reviews by a panel of five judges from Al-Hussein Bin Talal University: three PhD holders in management and two of PhD holders in English translation studies. This procedure was carried out to ensure the tools suitability to the purposes of the study.

2.1.4 Data analysis methods

Data analysis was carried out using a second-generation multivariate technique namely Partial Least Squares (PLS). SmartPLS v2.0 software was used to analyse the data (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). PLS technique allows independence of the data distribution. It also gives attention to oriented-prediction research models, robust validation tests of the psychometric properties of the tools used to gather the data, and testing the strength and the direction of the relationships among the constructs under the study (Ringle, et al., 2005).

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Respondents' profile

A demographic profile of Jordanian female managers is presented in Table 1. Around 55% of the respondents came from public sectors while 45% of the respondents are from private sectors. Further, the largest portion in age variable (30 to 35 years old comprises 28% of the total sample size, while the least (i.e. more than 51 years) was 3%. Work experience of 11 to 15 years comprises the largest portion in the study's sample size and more than 20 years comprises the least portion in the study's sample size. Around 36% of the respondents are married and 46% of the respondents hold bachelor's degree. Moreover, 42% of the respondents have 6-10 years of managerial position. Expectedly, around 60% of the total sample size responded that they have not taken any professional development courses. This is a widespread problem in the Arab world in the management field (Arar, Shapira, Azaiza, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2013) as well as other fields such as education (Alhabahba & Mahfoodh, 2016). Language usage variable revealed that only 68% of the total sample size use Arabic language as a means of communication, while 32% of the respondents use a mix of Arabic and English as a means of communication. There is no surprise in such result since language

education in Jordan is under many obstacles (Alhabahba, Pandian, & Mahfoodh, 2016). Mastering more than two languages is currently a top requirement in jobs market in Jordan and the region (Alhabahba, et al., 2016).

Table 1. Personal and demographic characteristics of the sample

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n = 409)	Percentage	Mean, SD
Type of sector			
Private	184	45.0	
Public	225	55.0	
Age			M = 2.84, SD = 1.29
below 29	64	15.6	
30–35 years	114	27.9	
36–40 years	111	27.1	
41–46 years	76	18.6	
46–50 years	30	7.3	
More than 51 years	14	3.4	
Work experience			M = 2.63, SD = 1.19
Less than 5 years	87	21.3	
6–10 years	104	25.4	
11–15 years	120	29.3	
16–20 years	68	16.6	
More than 20 years	30	7.3	
Marital Status			
Married	146	35.7	
Divorced	73	17.8	
Widowed	54	13.2	
Single	136	33.3	
Level of education			
Bachelor's	188	46.0	
High diploma	89	21.8	
Master's	70	17.1	
Doctorate	25	6.1	
Other	37	9.0	
Years in managerial position			M = 2.19, SD = 1.18
Less than 5 years	126	30.8	
6–10 years	173	42.3	
11–15 years	42	10.3	
16–20 years	39	9.5	
More than 20 years	29	7.1	
Professional development courses			

	No	244	59.7	
	Yes	165	40.3	
Language usage				
	English and Arabic	132	32.3	
	Arabic only	277	67.7	

3.1.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 provides an overview of the descriptive information of the variables under the study. Among the main constructs in the current study, the results show that organizational networks and interpersonal relationships seem to be the most important challenge woman can encounter with ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .42$). The second important ranked challenge by the sample of the current study is organizational cultural with ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .46$). The least important challenge was leadership challenges with ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .37$). For the sub-constructs of leadership challenges, the most important challenge was lack of resources with ($M = 4.31$, $SD = .45$), while the least was structural challenge ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .46$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

	Mean	Std. D
Organizational culture	4.15	.46
Organizational networks and interpersonal relationships	4.22	.42
Leadership challenges	4.10	.37
Structural Challenges	4.07	.46
Lack of empowerment	4.09	.47
Cultural Challenges	3.89	.53
Personal Challenges	4.18	.44
Lack of resources	4.31	.45

3.2 Assessment of Measurement Model

As mentioned earlier, the use of PLS approach can be useful in prediction-oriented research. In order to approach data driven decision regarding the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables, there are certain steps to be followed. First, the sample size adequacy was determined using number of items in the largest construct multiple by ten (Gopal, Bostrom, & Chin, 1992; Saleem, Beaudry, & Croteau, 2011). This condition was fulfilled since thirty-six items in leadership challenges multiplied by ten reached 360 and the sample size in the current study was 406. Second, two stages of examining the proposed research model were carried out. The first one is assessment of the measurement model, which involves discriminant and convergent validity, for example. The second stage involves assessment of the structural paths which includes path coefficients estimates (Hulland & Richard, 1999), for example.

To assess the measurement model, convergent and discriminant validity were carried out. For

convergent validity, each statement in each constructs was checked against its theoretical assumption and checked whether it is measuring what it is theoretically assumed to measure. To achieve this aim, reliability test and Average Variance Extract (AVE) test were used, with thresholds of .70 for reliability and .50 for AVE were maintained (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For discriminant validity, each construct was checked against its uniqueness (Saleem, et al., 2011). Loadings above .50 in which loadings should have higher scores on that particular construct than other latent ones can inform us with good convergent and discriminant decisions.

The initial factor structure conducted among the data revealed unclear structure for almost all constructs under examination. A number of iterations were then carried out for all the factors in order to achieve desirable discriminant validity criteria. Based on the results, three items from cultural challenges, two items from lack of resources, three items from personal challenges, three items from structural challenges, three items from organizational networks and interpersonal relationships, and three items from organizational culture were dropped. In respect to lack of resources construct, no items were dropped. Factors loadings scores revealed acceptable values as shown in Table 3. This can enabled us to carry out the model for further investigation.

As shown in Table 3, scores of internal consistency measures are higher than the threshold of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), scores were between .70 and .82. further, AVE scores were all above threshold of .50 and composite reliability scores were above .70 (Chin, 1998). The root square of AVE was calculated and scores (in diagonal) should exceed its correlation values with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results presented in Table 3 show that the root square of AVE calculations were above .71, which is considered above any correlation values among the constructs under investigation.

Table 3. Results of the Measurement Model (n = 405)

Construct	ICR	AVE	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. Cultural challenge	0.60	0.52	0.76	(0.72)						
2. Lack of empowerment	0.81	0.51	0.86	0.52	(0.71)					
3. Personal challenge	0.73	0.55	0.83	0.58	0.45	(0.74)				
4. Structural challenge	0.82	0.50	0.87	0.47	0.48	0.56	(0.71)			
5. Organizational networks	0.68	0.51	0.81	0.43	0.45	0.61	0.55	(0.71)		
6. Organizational culture	0.80	0.51	0.86	0.58	0.44	0.43	0.41	0.40	(0.71)	
7. Lack of resources	0.73	0.53	0.81	0.27	0.32	0.48	0.47	0.38	0.42	(0.73)

Notes: ICR: Internal Consistency Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; CR: Composite Reliability. Figures in parentheses represent the squared root of AVE, while the others represent the correlations. These diagonal elements should be higher than the correlation values indicated off-diagonal.

3.3 Assessment of the Structural Model

In order to investigate the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables, two conditions in assessment of the structural model were taken into account. The first is to assess the values of the R² obtained from the antecedents. Values equal to or more than 0.26 are considered large, values of 0.13 are considered medium, and 0.02 is considered small (Cohen, 1988). The second is to assess the values resulted from a bootstrapping procedure in which t-statistics can inform us about the significance level to decide whether the hypothetical model is compatible with the data from the sample of the study. The bootstrap procedure was carried out with 1000 resampling technique (Cheung & Lau, 2007).

Table 4. Results of the structural model assessment

Path	R ²	β	t-statistics	p	Remark
Organizational culture -> Cultural challenge	0.48	0.68	17.188	<0.001	
Organizational culture -> Lack of empowerment	0.24	0.26	3.833	<0.001	
Organizational culture -> Personal challenge	0.89	0.56	19.212	<0.001	
Organizational culture -> Structural challenge	0.53	0.38	7.512	<0.001	
Organizational culture -> Lack of resources	-	-0.05	0.939	>0.05	
Organizational networks -> Cultural challenge	0.48	0.02	0.350	>0.05	
Organizational networks -> Lack of empowerment	0.24	0.28	4.481	<0.001	
Organizational networks -> Personal challenge	0.89	0.50	16.753	<0.001	
Organizational networks -> Structural challenge	0.53	0.43	8.575	<0.001	
Organizational networks -> Lack of resources	0.55	0.77	15.737	<0.001	

Table 4 show the results of the assessment of the structural model. First, result of R² of organizational culture and networks effects on personal challenges was 0.89 which can be considered large effect. The result of R² of organizational culture and networks effects on structural challenge was 0.53 (large), cultural challenge was 0.48 (large), and lack of empowerment was 0.24 (large). The effect of organizational networks on lack of resources was 0.55 which is large.

SmartPLS was used to assess the path coefficients in the current hypothetical model. The results presented in Table 4 showed that organizational culture was positively and significantly associated to personal challenge (path = .56, p<0.001), cultural challenge (path = .68, p<0.001), structural challenge (path = .38, p<0.001), and lack of empowerment (path = .26, p<0.001). However, lack of resources (path = -.05, p>0.05) seem to be not affected by organization culture.

With a slightly different pattern of results, organizational networks and interpersonal relationships seem to have affected almost all variables in the hypothetical model based on the data. We observed positive and significant effects of organizational networks on personal challenge (path = 0.5, p<0.001), lack of resource (path = 0.77, p<0.001), structural challenge (path = 0.43, p<0.001), and lack of empowerment (path = 0.28, p<0.001). In a different pattern, organization networks and interpersonal relationships had no effect on cultural challenge (path = 0.02, p>0.05).

Based on the data obtained from our sample, it seems that almost all of our hypotheses are compatible with the hypothetical model introduced earlier. The next section discusses the results obtained from Partial Least Squares technique analysis.

4.1 Discussion

This study aims to, first to understand the challenges faced by Jordanian women leaders and, second, examine organizational factors that could explain the effects driven upon challenges

faced by Jordanian women leaders. Results of respondents profile presented earlier show that most participants in the current study are educated, with varying working experience as well as varying managerial position experience. In line with prior research conducted in the Arab context, perspectives of women involved in private or public sectors has grown steadily and consistently (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). This nominated the view of cultural changes of women involvement in various business sectors relative to the last decade perspectives (Khayat 1996 cited in Al- Ahmadi, 2011).

4.1.1 Research Question 1

Similar to the findings of Al-Ahmadi (2011), the descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 support the earlier claim that cultural challenges is the least concern among the sample of the study. This is an indication of evolving role of women in the society and a positive reflection of the policies of local and global organization in Jordan and in in the Arab region (Almenkash, Abdulaziz, Shaman, Haijan, & Dagsh, 2007). These signs, as the current results suggest, confirm that cultural aspects —despite their importance — are not a significant impediment to Jordanian women leaders. In the UAE, for example, societal attitudes towards women in managerial positions witnessed a shift from past restrictive traditional attitudes to a more liberal perspective (Mostafa, 2005). Further, lack of resources was found to be the most important challenge that women encounter in this study. This may be because first, the sample of this study is mixed of public and private sectors, which may impose the idea that public sector in Jordan, face financial challenges to support professional development and to provide adequate resources to the staff and women in particular. Jordan is being classified as middle-income country and this might be an indication of financial constraints to provide resources to both public and private sectors (e.g. adequate infrastructure). Second, as women in general have had recently gained access to leadership positions in the Arab region, and Jordan in specific, there might be some concerns to question the capabilities and managerial skills of women (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Al-Halawani, 2002). This superiority of gender beliefs is found relatively strong in the educational fields (Alhabahba, et al., 2016) in which wrong beliefs of stronger performance of boys is superior to girls' (Alhabahba, et al., 2016) and seems to be strongly present and extended to professional life of Jordanian citizens. Taking these issues into account, Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) concluded that Arab societies are reluctant to abandon beliefs that women are most suited at homes.

In the same vine, the results also show that amongst leadership's challenges, personal challenges was ranked as the most prominent challenge. As pointed out earlier, women have been introduced to managerial opportunities just recently. This may create strong driven fear force in combating with men with much more professional experience. As a result, self-confidence might be compromised when it comes to managerial positions. Further, the inherited beliefs of superiority of men's performance over women's seem to be taking role in creating fear of responsibility. Contrary to Al-Ahmadi (2011) results, women in KSA seems to enjoy professional training that prepares women for adequate strategies to overcome professional and personal challenges as KSA financial status is much more advanced in the whole region (cf. Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Lack of empowerment originates, as suggested by Alhmadi, from lack of self-efficacy driven by their degree of self-confidence in

decision-making, knowledge and managerial skills and ability to be aware of one's performance.

4.1.2 Research Question 2

The findings of structural measurement model assessment revealed that most paths have significant effects on leadership challenges. First, the effect of organizational culture seems to be driven upon most leadership challenges. Prior research on culture of organization in the Arab region concluded that the work culture of organization seems to play role in impeding women's career progression if women can gain access to such work. Unsupportive and discriminant towards women are strongest concerns to the women force power in the Arab world (Jamali, et al., 2005; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). It seems that Arab culture share the same values and perceptions towards women in the workplace. Thus, Jordanian women in the workplace are no exception. These prevailing social and cultural values tend to influence the organization culture and employment and promotion practices in the Arab region at large (Metcalf, 2007). Further, the patriarchal thought that governing most sectors in the Arab organizations seems to prevailing, which provokes the superiority of men over women in managerial advancement (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). The results of this study seem to reflect that Jordanian females are in much need for a supportive organizational culture that can give considerable attention to professional women growth based on performance rather than discriminatory factors such as gender. Therefore, Jordanian organizations need to pave the way for more gender-neutral work environment and reduce any interfering of discriminatory factor. Since organizational culture has had significant effect upon most leadership challenge, it is not unusual to say that Jordanian organizations tend to favour men over women in professional development, promotion and employment. Attitudes to women in the workplace seem to be moving slowly towards a more positive direction but Arab societies are reluctant due to the interference of cultural beliefs and values. Consequently, Jordanian females seem to experience lack of support, opportunities for professional growth and trust as a qualified individual to do the job.

Similar pattern of results are found in the relationship between organizational networks and interpersonal relationship and leadership challenges. Singh, Vinnicombe, and Kumra (2006) reported that developing one's interpersonal networks and relationships at workplace is an important element of work success. Generally, women face difficulties in establishing work relationships with others in a workplace (Omar & Davidson, 2001). The findings of this study seem to support the former notion. If women face discrimination based on gender and receive very little support from the society, how developing ones relationship is captivated? If discrimination is commonly a practice among Jordanian organizations, and it seems to be the case, then this might demotivate women from developing networks and interpersonal relationship with other colleagues (including females). There might be also many other attributes that may contribute to this phenomenal issue. First, seems little support from men is extended to women in workplace and, second, it seems that women have developed a state in which men are thought of superiors to themselves. What might constitute this scenario is that organizations supported by the current and prevailing views of society which internalized gender hierarchy of men as superiors to oneself (Wajcman, 2013). Based on the former

notions, it is logically valid to question whether Jordanian organizations paid efforts to create a healthy working environment that support women professional development. Above that, Jordanian organization professional practices are put into question in respect to supporting women social relationships.

5.1 Limitations, implications and future research

It should be warned to the readers of the current study not to assume causality as the data of the current study is cross-sectional in nature. In terms of the generalizations of the findings, the data obtained from the respondents is considered relatively large. However, the data was collected in one major city in Jordan. Therefore, respondents (or female leaders) in different cities might/not experience the same conditions that the current sample of this study do. Thus, future research might consider examining different locations in Jordan as well as more complicated research designs are recommended. Further, researchers might also consider the sector nature of the organization (i.e. private or public) to unleash potential differences in leadership challenges and associated factors.

Implications in the present study are specifically directed to Jordanian organizations and to the ones in the Arab region at large. Since the findings of the current study suggested that Jordanian women career progression is hampered by organizations culture and network and interpersonal relationships, it is then recommended to adopt/adapt a training and professional development programs that should tighten the gaps in perceptions towards women in the workplace. They, the training programs, should also capture the important fact that the performance of staff should not be based on gender in respect to work progression. This could create a free gender discrimination environment that focuses on performance rather than the gender of the individual staff. Thus, a training program consisting of fair selection procedures, efficient activation use of qualification, and credentials and performance appraisals could be of interest to Arab organizations. The findings of the study communicate to the unfilled gap of research on woman managers in Jordan. Further, the study advances some understanding of the barriers faced by women in managerial positions across private and public sectors in the country. Accordingly, this can help public and private sectors in engaging with the diversity agenda in Jordan. The findings also suggest a better understanding of how public and private sectors can make progress with challenges encountered by the organizations. This work also provides public and private sectors policymakers with better insights on how to help female managers progress in their careers.

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