

Gender and Equality in the Workplace at Higher Education Institutions in Israel: a study of Arab Female Employees in leadership and Management positions compared to Arab Male Employees

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Abstract

The development of leadership is a key concept in the current business environment. However, when it comes to gender-based roles among organizations of different natures and workplaces, women are the ones who remain subject to inferiority, discrimination and bias, particularly when it comes to assuming organizations' management and leadership roles. In this regard, women inhabiting the Arab sector of Israel continue to face discrimination and gender inequality when they endeavor to acquire key organizational roles among the majority community. In the case of Israel, despite having more presence, good education and the required workplace expertise, they are still reeling from the evils of facing discrimination and bias from their male counterparts. Socio-religious practices and taboos established in households are one major factor of such discrimination, negatively affecting their workplace presence among organizations. From this perspective, this comprehensive research attempts to analyse leadership and management positions acquired by the women belonging to the Arab community dwelling in Israel. The results showed that even though a lot has been done to make workplace policies for women more open, both at the organisational and government levels, the fact that women have less education than men, their families are more conservative, and Arab women are still seen as different or less capable because of their gender and ethnicity. All of these things make it hard to give Arab women more leadership and management positions.

Keywords: Gender, Equality in the Workplace, Arab Female Employees, leadership and Management positions

1. Introduction:

Leadership development is one of the key concepts in the current business environment. Companies are more focused than ever on developing leadership skills among their employees. However, these companies have to face significant challenges in this regard. Gender differences and equality in the workplace are one of the challenges that have been faced in the microenvironment for decades now. Increasing awareness around workplace equality and reducing gender-based discrimination has forced companies to work on these aspects and enhance their efficiency in leadership development by improving workplace culture. This study focused on the subject of gender-based differences and equality in the workplace regarding leadership development. Understanding these terms is vital to understand the need to study this particular phenomenon. Therefore, this section of the study provided a brief introduction to the particular phenomenon under study and the aim and research questions of the current study.

1.1. Gender Equality

The second decade of the 21st century has witnessed significant social discourse concerning gender equality. Landmark events like the United Nations' campaign of "HeForShe" in 2014 and the "MeToo" movement in 2017 have shown unprecedented public interest in this subject matter. The United Nations campaign started a global solidarity movement, Saint, to encourage men to become allies for gender equality (ILO, 2022). On the other hand, the "Me too" movement raised the issue of sexual harassment of women. All these issues surround the idea of gender equality and its presence in professional and personal settings. Gender equality, as defined by the United Nations, refers to "equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men in employment." Gender equality in the workplace means women have the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities as men (Abdou, 2022). Gender equality means considering men's and women's interests and needs to recognise their workplace diversity. Gender equality has become a human rights problem and a prerequisite for people-centred sustainable human development.

1.1.1 Gendered Stereotyping

The concept of gender equality emerged as an issue due to gender stereotypes in society. In most societies, the role of women has been that of a homemaker. Gender stereotypes have affected women's workplace advancement. Stereotypes have hindered women's success and caused the glass ceiling and gender wage gap. Peter says the glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing in their job (Haj-Yahya et al., 2022). Glass ceilings hurt women and other minorities. No, or few growth chances prevent women from rising in an organisation.

The glass ceiling is considered a result of gender stereotyping in society, which indicates society's beliefs regarding how gender should behave. Regard to gender stereotyping also emphasises areas that differentiate between men and women. In most societies, being a man is considered a privilege in comparison to being a woman. Glass ceiling implies that with all the necessary competence, women still have to face rejection in comparison to men as they are stereotyped as being deficient in comparison to men (IDI, 2011). The gender pay gap is a concept that also stems from gendered stereotyping and refers to the difference between the salary of men and women for the same job role in a workplace. Although, in the recent past, reports have shown some improvement in the gender pay gap, where the average pay gap for full-time and part-time

employees has reduced. However, the narrowing gender pay gap does not present a complete solution to the universal issue of the gender pay gap. This issue is significantly prominent in cases where men and women are compensated differently for completing similar tasks requiring a similar level of skill and value.

In the last few decades, there has been a push toward gender equality, as seen by the female labour market's indicators of widespread involvement by women, including working mothers (Miaari et al., 2020). Differences in employment rates between mothers and those who are child-free narrowed dramatically by the century's end. Recent statistics suggest that more and more women are willing to work, and there is an increasing number of mothers participating in economic activity in countries. Previously, working mothers were more comfortable with flexible working hours and settings than working full time; however, these trends are changing as even mothers are working full time now and becoming a part of the workplace. Therefore, the current study indicates that women advance their careers by taking more responsibility in the workplace (Arar & Abramovitz, 2013). There is an increased commitment to a career, and as a result, women can communicate their capability of meeting the requirements to get equal chances of career advancement.

1.2. Cultural and Political Standpoints in Israel

To understand gender equality in the workplace, the overall culture of a country can play an important role. In Israel, gender equality in workplaces is an important part of overall legal frameworks. A Report suggested that 83.3 % of legal frameworks under the strategic development goals (SDGs) indicators are put in place in Israel (Mhajne, 2021). As of February 2021, women hold about 27% of parliamentarian seats in the country. In 2018, over 6% of women between 15 and 49 experienced physical or sexual abuse by a current or former intimate partner, indicating that gender equality still needs improvement. Aside from that, only 34.5% of indicators of SDGs were related to the gender perspective in December 2020.

A report identified that there are significant gaps regarding gender equality in the country (Hideg & Krstic, 2021). These key areas include unpaid care, domestic work, information and communication, and technology skills. Aside from that, there are many key areas where significant work has been done, but there are no regular monitoring methodologies to identify shortcomings in these key areas. It includes gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, gender and

environment, and access to assets by female members. These key factors should be considered to achieve the gender-related strategic development goals (SDGs), and the gender data gap should be closed (UN Women, 2021).

Regarding gender data gaps and country performance, Women Count Data Hub has devised the methodology for 193 UN member states. According to this methodology, 72 gender-specific SDG indicators are taken from the Women Count Data Hub's dashboard (McKinsey Report, 2021). 33rd and 66th percentile of the distribution is calculated, and countries are classified into high-performance, medium-performance, and low-performance categories Based on these two values. According to the data for Israel, in comparison to the Asian region, around 65.5% of the data is missing, whereas this percentage is 61% for the Asian region. However, around 19.7 % of the indicators lay under the high-performance category (UN Women, 2021).

According to the gender data, economic aspects like inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work have also been recognised. These statistics indicate that there is a lot of missing data in regard to the employed population below the age of 15. Aside from that, almost all female and male members of the population above the pensionable age are receiving their pension, whereas the unemployment rate for female members is 3.9% and 3.7% for male members that are of the age of 15+. As far as the social aspects of gender gap data are concerned, the statistics suggest that 100% of working mothers are receiving maternity cash benefits (Iwn, 2022). The prevalence of severe food insecurities in the adult population is 7.8 % for females, whereas it is 8.5 % for male members of society. As far as the maternal mortality ratio is concerned, 3 per 100 thousand live births are recorded. The political landscape regarding gender gap data provides some interesting facts in Israel. These statistics indicate that women hold around 26.7% of the national parliament's seats.

In contrast, around 17.1% of the elected seats in the deliberative bodies of local government are held by women (Cultural Atlas, 2019). Aside from that, in the political landscape, around 34.6% of managerial positions are held by women, whereas women also hold 34.8 % of senior and middle-level management seats. However, the statistics also identified a lot of missing data regarding tracking and making public education for women's empowerment and gender equality in Israel.

Statistics have also provided information on the legal frameworks in the country that focuses on promoting and monitoring gender inequality. There are four key areas concerning the legal framework for which the statistics are recorded in the country (UN Women, 2021). The first area is the overarching legal frameworks and public life, which stand at 81.8 %. The second key area is violence against women, scoring 70% on the spectrum of legal frameworks. Another key area is the employment and economic benefits for women in the country, and it scored 83.33% on the achievement spectrum of legal frameworks. Lastly, marriage and family legal frameworks have scored 54.5% on the achievement spectrum.

As far as the environmental aspects of gender gap data are concerned (Shoshana, 2016), there is a lot of missing information, like the mortality rate attributed to household air pollution, etc., in Israel. An interesting statistic about environmental aspects is that the proportion of the population using safely managed drinking water in urban or rural areas is 99%, which is quite a high number. In addition, the proportion of the population with immediate access to clean fuels and technology is above 95%, which is also an encouraging number. However these statistics are encouraging, but they also indicate that there is significant room for improvement as well.

1.2.1 Microenvironment regarding gender equality in Israel

The microenvironment indicates the business environment in a country in regard to strategic, corporate, and operational aspects of businesses. It also indicates organizational culture and other implicit aspects of organisations. The statistics for decent work to the economic growth in Israel are quite interesting. These statistics understand gender equality in the workplace in Israel. According to these statistics, the average hourly earnings of employees are 55.7 for women, whereas it is 66.3 for men in local currency (Arar & Abramovitz, 2013). The unemployment rate for females (3.9%) is higher than the unemployment rate for men (3.7%) but by a very small percentage. On the other hand, the statistics for the unemployment rate by sex and disability is 4% for both men and women and decreased from last year. These indicators suggest that the microenvironment concerning gender equality in Israel is supportive and has improved significantly over time.

1.3. Arab Community in Israel

The Arab community is 20.6 percent of the total population as of 2021. Most of these Arabs are Muslims; however, there is a small percentage of Christians and Druze. The Arab society in

Israel has undergone significant transformations since the establishment of Israel (Fuchs & Wilson, 2018). As the military government is in control of the political, economic, and social aspects of the country, it also affects the Arab community in Israel. The land dispute between Israel and Palestine has pushed the Arab community from being self-reliant to becoming labour workers in Israel. As a result of this transition, it has made Arab society live in poor conditions. Underdeveloped infrastructures, a higher rate of unemployment, and housing shortages are a few of the problems that are faced by the Arab community in Israel (Larom & Lifshitz, 2018). The Arab community has been through many psychological issues like questioning personal identity, frequent feelings of inferiority in Jewish culture and institutions, and fear and insecurity. As a result, the Arab community tends to preserve its traditional patriarchal structures to protect them from western influence and preserve their cultural values.

1.3.1 Arab Women in Israel

In this regard, the status of women in Israel becomes even more significant as, in Muslim societies, women are viewed as preservation sites for cultural and religious aspects. In Arab culture, women have a different upbringing in comparison to Western culture. Women's access to education, employment, and representation in politics are all dynamics that are affected by Arab culture (Arar et al., 2013). According to a report, only eight Arab women have ever served in Israeli politics since 1949. Political and societal influences are constituted as the aspects that contribute to the small number of Arab women's representation in politics in Israel. As far as the educational background of Arab women in Israel is concerned, according to recent statistics, around 10.6% of Arab women had a college degree in 2008, which had increased from the level of 5.2% in 2001 (Brookdale, 2018).

The report suggested that nearly 50% of Bedouin and Druze enrolled in higher education in 2013; however, despite these advances, the percentage of Arab women holding a degree is way smaller than Israeli women. The employment rate of women between the ages of 25 and 54 is significantly different between Jewish and Arab Israeli women. The percentage for all Arab Israeli women lies between 30 to 35%, whereas this percentage was around 90% for all Jewish women in Israel in 2016. Although these statistics have suggested an increasing trend since 2001, the gap between the employment rate of Arab Israeli and Jewish women is still very large.

Arab women are mostly employed in sectors where they are paid lower-than-average salaries. More than one-half of Arab women work in health, education, and social services and earn salaries lower than nationals in the country (Saris, 2017). There are only 0.8% of Arab women working in the information and communication sector as of 2019. The concentration of Jewish women in the education, health, and social services sectors is also significantly high. There are many Arab women employers in the service and sales industry and professionals.

1.3.2 Arab Men in Israel

An economic perspective on the employment of the Arab community in history provided interesting facts about Israeli men and women in the economic sector. Arab men and women are mostly employed on low salaries and positions where no highly skilled labour is required. Mostly Arab men are employed in the construction, retail, wholesale trade, manufacturing, hospitality, and transport industries (Schmayer, 2022). There is a very small percentage of Arab men that work in information and communication industries, financial services, scientific and technical services, and even public administration. Economic sectors where mostly Arab men are employed for hard labour, have salaries that are lower than the salaries of Jewish and local men (Balf, 2020). Even in highly skilled labour sectors, Arab workers earn less than the nationals in Israel.

Moreover, the segregation between the Arab community and the Jewish community based on the employers' perspective also provides interesting patterns. Regarding the employers, in the construction and manufacturing industry, around 46.1% of the employers are Arab men. On the contrary, the smallest number of Arab employers that are men are skilled workers in agriculture, around 1.9%.

1.4. Leadership and Management Position in Israel

Female managers and leaders in Israeli Arab society usually navigate between their identity and traditional social values. As traditional social values imply leadership and management as a masculine roles, this navigation between feminine identity and traditional values requires some hard work on behalf of Arab women (Mhajne, 2021). The statistics indicate that as the higher education trends in Arab women are increasing, the penetration of women in managerial positions has also increased, especially in the education sector. However, there is still a very large gap in other sectors where Arab women are in small numbers. Being a part of the Middle Eastern region, there are certain barriers to women's employment and leadership in Israel.

According to reports, in the MENA region, women face similar barriers regarding employment and leadership issues as in other parts of the world. As the development trajectories of countries in the MENA region differ from those of Western countries, these barriers affect the women in the MENA region quite differently (Hideg & Krstic, 2021). Developmental trajectories and their impact on political, economic, and social features are significantly different, affecting women's employment and leadership opportunities in the MENA region. As the employment and leadership opportunities are very low in Israel for Arab women, it is difficult for women to progress and advance their careers. However, there are other reasons for Arab women in Israel not being able to reach managerial and leadership positions.

1.5. Problem Statement

Gender inequality is a complex phenomenon that has become a concern around the globe with the increasing role of working women in the economy as women are increasingly becoming a part of the labour market in countries around the globe. Although the current statistics indicate an improvement over the period, there is still room for improvement. Women struggle due to the global cultural and social norms and the inferior treatment at the hands of societies where men are considered as a superior gender (UN Women, 2021). These issues and barriers are even more complex for Arab women with strict religious and social values rooted in patriarchal models. Palestinian Arab women are no exception to this, as these women are taught from childhood that leadership is an appropriate act for men only.

Given these circumstances, where Arab women are already suppressed, migrating from Palestine to Israel has forced these women to address even more complex issues (MFA, 2016). As the Arab community in Israel is not well-educated, most men and women leave their studies even before the start of higher education. Therefore, it is difficult for the Arab community to take leadership and managerial positions which require a highly skilled workforce (Hadad Haj-Yahya et al., 2018). Gender equality and leadership in the workplace have been discussed in the past literature; however, with the increasing participation of Arab men and women in the skilled labour category arises, the need for researchers to understand the role of gender equality for Arab men and women in the workplaces in Israel. This study identified this gap in the research and focused on identifying the role of gender inequality concerning Arab men and women in the workplace in Israel.

2. Materials and Methods

In order to explore the problem of this research and find an answer to its questions, I have chosen the “Mixed method” to be the methodology of my research, in other words, the methodology of my research will depend on both quantitative and qualitative parts.

While the quantitative part enables us to see the big picture and examine the phenomena on the macro level, the qualitative part of the research will enable us to get a deep understanding of the research problem and help us examine it from the micro level, by raising the participants’ voice, point of view, experiences and perceptions.

3. Results:

Test number 1

H₀: Gender equality in workplaces concerning Arab men and women in Israel is not an issue

H₁: Gender equality in workplaces concerning Arab men and women in Israel is an issue

Table 1: T-Test number

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gender Equality An Issue	Male	100	3.51	1.64221	0.16422
	Female	100	4.01	1.69071	0.16907

The above table contains the statistics of two variables i.e., Gender and Gender equality an issue. The sample size is equal for both groups, male and female, 100 and 100, respectively. Mean and standard deviation for Gender equality as an issue vis-à-vis gender are higher for females than males, i.e., male $\bar{x}=3.5100$ $\sigma=1.64221$ & female $\bar{x}=4.0100$ $\sigma=1.69071$.

Table 2 Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	std. error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Gender Equality An Issue	Equal variances assumed	1.497	0.223	-2.121	198	0.035	-0.5	0.2357	-	-
									0.9648	0.0352
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.121	197.3	0.035	-0.5	0.2357	-	-
								0.9648	0.0352	

The assumption of the equality of variances is checked before running the T-test. To this end, Levene's test is given in the above table. The non-significant Levene's p-value $>.05$ indicates the equality of variances is assumed and thus no violation of assumption (Pallant, 2011). As f sig.223 is much higher than the level of significance .05, variances are quite equal and t results can be now interpreted based on this value. Looking ahead, the T value -2.121, DF= 198, and sig. (2-tailed) .035 is less than the level of significance .05. It boosts the 95 percent confidence interval to interpret that the means of the two groups are significantly different and reject H_0 : Gender equality in workplaces concerning Arab men and women in Israel is not an issue. The next column shows about mean -.50000 differences in the males and females on gender equality an issue. Hence, males and females significantly differ in terms of gender equality an issue. It is concluded that gender equality in workplaces concerning Arab men and women in Israel is an issue.

T-test number 2

H₀: There is no difference between Arab men and women in the managerial and leadership positions in workplaces in the context of Israel

H₁: There is a difference between Arab men and women in the managerial and leadership positions in workplaces in the context of Israel

Table 3 T-test number 2

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Manager or Leadership positions	Male	100	5.176	1.76092	0.17609
	Female	100	4.636	1.84864	0.18486

The above table gives information on the statistics of two variables i.e., Gender and Manager or leadership positions. The sample size is equal for both groups male and female 100 and 100, respectively. Mean and standard deviation for Manager or leadership positions vis-à-vis gender are higher for males than females i.e., male $\bar{x}=5.1760$ $\sigma=1.76092$ & female $\bar{x}=4.6360$ $\sigma=1.84864$.

Table 4 Independent Sample Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test		df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.					t	Lower
Manager or Leadership positions	Equal variances assumed	0.821	0.366	2.115	198	0.036	0.54	0.25531	0.03652
	Equal variances not assumed			2.115	197.534	0.036	0.54	0.25531	0.03652

Table 5 Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for EM		df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.					t	Lower	Upper
Barriers	Equal variances assumed	0.006	0.939	-1.992	198	0.048	-2.2396	1.12437	-4.45688	-0.02232
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.992	195.887	0.048	-2.2396	1.12437	-4.45702	-0.02218

The variances of males and females are checked to meet the assumption of the T-test. For this purpose, Levene's test is assessed in the above table. As f sig.939 is much higher than the level

of significance of .05, variances are quite equal between the two groups under analysis. After the analysis of the assumption, t results can be now interpreted based on the value. Next to F sig. is the t-test results. The T value -1.992, DF= 198, and sig. (2-tailed) .048 is lower than the level of significance of .05. It encourages about a 95 percent confidence interval to interpret that the means of the two groups are significantly different. The next column shows about mean -2.23960 differences in the males and females in Manager or leadership positions. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected that there is no difference in Arab men and women in the managerial and leadership positions in workplaces in the context of Israel because males and females significantly differ in terms of Managers or leadership positions. It is concluded that there is a difference between Arab men and women in the managerial and leadership positions in workplaces in the context of Israel.

4. Discussion

This study was conducted to analyze “Gender and equality in the workplace: a study of Arab Women in leadership and management positions in Israel compared to the Arab men”. The study was comprised of a 200-sample size. The sample size of 200 was proportionately divided into males and females 100 and 100, respectively to study the influence of gender on equality in the workplace among Arab Women in leadership and management positions in Israel compared to Arab men. The data was analyzed and then visualized in charts, tables, and graphs to make it easier understandable.

Chi-square results confirm the association between gender and the perception of Arabs of men and women equality. The findings of this study extended the results of earlier studies by bringing a novelty in the insights. In a scholarly work, a comparison between Arab and non-Arab societies yielded significant differences between Arabs' and non-Arabs' perceptions of men and women's equality; the former considered women inferior to men than latter perceived little better women as compared to men (Rizzo et al., 2016).

Consequently, women were found to be less likely for managerial and leadership positions in workplaces in the context of Israel. The worst is the situation in the workplace for women that they are subject to gender bias. The statistics of the t-test revealed that employees behave differently towards Arab women in leadership and management positions versus men in the same

positions. Bearing in mind this, Braun et al., amazingly described this fact as “think follower-think women, think manager-think men” (Braun et al., 2017).

To what extent they were true can be gauged from the findings of this study. What Braun et al., mean by thinking that way was about the cultural customs influencing the overall mentality, perception, and attitude of the individuals. The results affirm that customs make a central contribution to the respondent’s participation in the non-formal education programs. The customs are the repeated followed behaviours that bifurcate men and women into two different but related worlds. Religion was yet another important factor that made a significant contribution to the respondent’s participation in non-formal social education programs.

In addition, economic factors, location of the program, and more importantly gender were even not behind in the significant contribution to the respondent’s participation in non-formal social education programs. The reason behind the lack of women in managerial and leadership positions was great barriers toward gender equality in workplaces concerning Arab men and women in the context of Israel as seen in the p-value $<.05$ of the above hypothesis testing. The theoretical work on this dimension of previous scholars named it the glass ceiling which is cultural, organizational, and structural barriers preventing women from high leadership or managerial posts in society (Johns, 2013). In the other key reasons behind gender inequality, the findings show gender roles hold the lion’s share. Women are subject to discrimination at home because of these role differences between men and women. Miserably, the worst is the situation outside the home. Results show that the community, including workplaces, is the major avenue for gender discrimination. Though gender discrimination entails both men and women, this study’s findings are testifying women are discriminated against at the hands of their counterpart men.

Admittedly, gender discrimination is practiced in many forms against the gender equality of women versus men. The researcher in another study conducted on Arabs found forms of gender discrimination; subordinate, marginalization, violence, and stereotypes (*Gender Discrimination of Woman in Arab in “In The Land of Invisible Women” Novel by Qanta A. Ahmed (Feminist Approach) - Repositori UIN Alauddin Makassar, n.d.*). Consistent with the previous studies, this study observed that gender stereotypes are one of the main forms of gender discrimination that impact women Arab women’s journey to and retention of a leadership and management position. Moreover, the findings show organizational strategies and policy implications in place regarding

gender inequality in workplaces for Arab men and women. The organization's policies and practices both visibly and invisibly impact the overall women's subordinate roles in workplaces and increase gender gaps across the world (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). The ground realities leave no doubt to refute such a rational argument indeed.

The major part of this dissertation included the intervention program. An intervention of a workshop was designed to evaluate the difference in the treatment of Gender and equality in the workplace among Arab Women in leadership and management positions in Israel compared to Arab men. The workshop was conducted at the University level to identify the young students' (aged between 19 to 20) with knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding gender and equality in the workplace among Arab Women in leadership and management positions in Israel compared to Arab men. The KAP (knowledge, attitudes, and practices) study is widely practiced by scholars, research dissertation students, and other academia. To save the pre-workshop students' knowledge, attitudes, and practices, the questionnaire was distributed before the start of the actual workshop program.

5. Conclusion

Throughout the research, it was well understood that there is a significant influence of gender phenomenon when it comes to the leadership and management positions in the Arab sector of Israel, especially considering the less number of women managers and leaders in the public and private organizations of Israel. It is due to the fact that relatively to men, women are less educated and less adept at handling occupational tasks owing to socio-religious taboos existent in different households. Also, parents generally see education as a less priority for women compared to men, since the primary responsibility of the former is to do household tasks rather than occupying themselves in the external professional market or handling organizational level tasks.

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