AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

WOMEN BECOMING LEADERS: THE CASE OF LEBANESE WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by
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Although we are in the twenty-first century and women comprise almost half of the teaching workforce, women are still underrepresented in senior faculty and administrative positions in higher education institutions (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Hannum et al., 2015). Throughout the history of the field of educational administration, women didn't have a steady increase in their representation in administrative positions. In addition, women's representation in administration is greatly influenced by the events and political changes that occurred. According to BlackChen (2015), one of the plausible explanations for women's underrepresentation is the glass ceiling effect. To examine women's representation in senior leadership positions in higher education institutions in Lebanon, this research study explored the Lebanese women educational leaders' experiences and their perspectives on the factors that positively and negatively influenced them to obtain senior leadership positions in higher education. In addition, the study investigated the deliberate actions that the women leaders undertook such as formal training and personal problem-solving tactics to attain their high-ranking positions. To conduct this research study, a qualitative research design and specifically a case study approach (Merriam, 2009) was utilized. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 women from these high-ranking positions: associate provost, dean, associate/assistant dean, director of a department/center/initiative/program/institute, associate/assistant director of a department /center/initiative/program/institute, and chairperson/director of an academic unit. By conducting this research study, practical and theoretical recommendations were suggested. Practically, the university's senior administration is recommended to revise and improve the policies and procedures pertaining to recruiting and promoting women, provide formal leadership training to women leaders by creating leadership development and mentorship programs, provide women leaders with institutional support, and create professional networks for women leaders. The theoretical implication of the research study was to cover the knowledge gap in the Arab region by exploring the women leaders' journeys, to further explain the challenges women face, to describe the external factors that facilitated women's ascension, and to state that society and politics are inevitable impeding factors in leadership positions in higher education institutions in Lebanon. Although the research study at hand attempted to cover the gap in the Lebanese knowledge base, there is still a need to have further research studies that explore the experiences of women leaders.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, women have achieved major strides towards gender equality in attaining education. The data presented by The World Bank (2017) indicates a global and noticeable increase in the literacy rates of females aged fifteen and above – 76.949% in the year 2000 to 81.482% in 2010 - in addition to having more females completing their primary education and progressing to secondary schools. Also, more females are completing their tertiary education and obtaining higher educational degrees (Cheung & Halpern, 2010) which implies that females are increasingly represented in the universities' student body. For instance, 56.97% of the student body was women compared to 43.03% men in higher education in the United States (U.S.) in 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Evidence of this advancement toward equality can also be found in the Middle Eastern region, for example in Lebanon 45.74% are females and 39.54% are male students who were enrolled in higher education institutions in 2014 (The World Bank, 2017). In other Arab countries such as Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria females are part of the universities' student body and they account for 40% the student population (Naciri, 2003).

Although these numbers on student enrollment in higher education are promising, women are entering the workforce but are unable to hold senior positions. A study conducted by the ESCWA in 2002 revealed that women in Lebanon are overlooked in managerial positions across different sectors. The study suggested that women "tend to be employed in an assisting capacity; men, however, tend to be more concentrated in managerial roles" (p.5). In Lebanon, of the "general managers" 0.24% are males while 0.2% are females and the "other managers" comprise of 8.99% males and 6.48% females (World Bank, 2009, p. 53). In a more recent report conducted by the World Economic Forum (2015), the ratio of Lebanese

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women to men legislators, senior officials and managers is 0.09. Moreover, only 4% of the firms in Lebanon have female senior managers with the Chief Executive Officer being the highest position attained (World Economic Forum, 2015). From this statistical information, Lebanon is ranked globally 138 out of 145 and 11 out of 16 in the Middle Eastern and North African region in closing the gender gap in "economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment" (World Economic Forum, 2015, p. 4)

This significant underrepresentation of females in senior positions is also mirrored in higher education institutions. Evidence suggests that there are very few women holding formal leadership positions[1] in universities as well as senior professorial ranks in both Western and Middle Eastern countries. Cook (2012) reported in his article that only 26% of the university presidents in the United States were women. Also, the percentage of female vice chancellors in the Commonwealth countries except for of Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom was less than 11% (Morley, 2005a). This pattern of women's underrepresentation in formal leadership positions is also visible in South Asian (Morley & Crossouard, 2015) and the Middle Eastern regions. Similarly, there are very few female academicians in senior professorial ranks. Harris and Leberman (2012) reported in their research study which was conducted in New Zealand that there are 17.22% full professors and 28.02% associate professors who are females. Also, in Australia only 19.1% of the full professors are women (Tessens et al., 2011). Although public information about the representation of Arab women in senior professorial ranks in higher education institutions is scarce, a few studies do reveal that few women in the Middle East hold high professorial positions. For example, Karam and Afiouni's (2013) report in their research study that 5.4%

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[1]The definition of the term *formal leadership position* in this research study is used to mean both academic and administrative high-ranking positions that have authority and power according to the organization's hierarchy

and 3.5% of full and associate professors are women in the American University of Beirut in Lebanon and 5.8% full professors and 10.8% associate professors are women in Qatar University.

This phenomenon of having few women in leadership positions is surprising especially in a profession dominated by women and considered to be a feminine profession (Leathwood & Read, 2008); so, it is expected to have the majority of the teaching and leadership positions held by women. Unfortunately, worldwide, women are underrepresented in senior faculty and administrative positions both in universities (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Leathwood & Read, 2008) and in schools (Shakeshaft, 1999).

Because of the existence of this phenomenon, a few scholars began investigating women's underrepresentation in leadership positions. Charol Shakeshaft (1999) explored women's representation in the field of educational administration in the United States by providing a historical overview of women in teaching and in educational administration. Women were first allowed to teach in the 18th century. Even then, women were considered unqualified because they were unable to receive any formal education. By 1820, the U.S. became an industrial country. This transition into industrialism prompted men to leave the teaching profession and to aspire for other careers and jobs. Thus, women became their replacements in teaching positions. However, the female teachers did not have the same pay or status as males (Shakeshaft, 1999). By the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, 70.1% of the teachers were women and a large number of women obtained administrative positions in schools (Shakeshaft, 1999). In the Golden Age that lasted from the 1900s to the 1930s, 55% of elementary principals were women, 25% were county superintendents, 8% were secondary school principals, and 1.6% were district superintendents (Shakeshaft, 1999, p. 104). After the 1930s, and during the Great Depression there was a significant decline in the number of women in administrative positions because

men were replacing women due to the limited job opportunities that was available for men. With the outbreak of World War II, there was an increase in the number of women in administrative positions because the men joined armies to fight. However, at the end of World War II and during the Cold War, again the number of women decreased in administrative positions because men returned from the war and reclaimed their teaching positions (Shakeshaft, 1999). In the 1970s, the Modern Feminist Movement began and helped women attain more administrative positions at school.

This historical overview reveals that women's representation in administration was greatly influenced by political and social changes which impeded women from having a steady increase in their representation in administrative positions. Despite remarkable improvements in the 21st century that have occurred within universities, such as the introduction of new degrees and programs offered, the implementation of changes within the institutions' internal governance, and the increase in the number of funding grants, a gender gap between men and women in higher education institutions still persists (Morley, 2005a).

This underrepresentation could be due to several reasons; one of them is the existence of obstacles referred to as the glass ceiling. According to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1991-1996), the glass ceiling refers to the existing obstacles women and minorities face when advancing in their careers. BlackChen (2015) and Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009) explained in their research studies that one of the challenges women face which impedes their ascension to senior positions is the presence of the glass-ceiling phenomenon. This obstacle is also prevalent in the Arab region because Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) also reported in their research study that educated women with rich work experiences are unable to obtain a more senior and managerial position.

Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009) explain that the glass ceiling effect is one of the reasons for the disproportionate representation of women in leadership positions in higher education institutions. Bain and Cummings (2000) explain that the glass ceiling phenomenon is integrated within the societal, professional-organizational, and institutional factors. The societal obstacle women face would be the society's unwillingness to accept and foster women reaching formal leadership positions (Bain & Cummings, 2000). The professional-organizational factor includes the experience and academic productivity of women and is usually manifested in women having short careers in academia, marginalized positions, and in them being discouraged by others to attain formal leadership positions (Bain & Cummings, 2000). Also, women are found to have low academic productivity in terms of research studies because they are given fewer resources than their male counterparts (Bain & Cummings, 2000). The institutional challenge is how the university is structured in terms of what are its vision, mission, goals and which model does it adopt, the American, Australian, British, German, Latin, or East Asian (Bain & Cummings, 2000). For example, the aim of the German model is to produce high-quality research (Bain & Cummings, 2000). Thus, women need to keep up with the intense research rate despite the obstacles that they face such as given fewer resources to be able to continue working in the university let alone advance.

Interestingly, although research studies reported that women hold leadership positions, these positions are typically located at the lower and middle-rank leadership positions. Studies found that this phenomenon comprises both women academicians and administrators and is globally prevalent (Bolton & Muzio, 2008; Deem et al., 2000; Finkelstein, 2010; Leathwood, 2005; Leathwood & Read, 2008; UNESCO, 2002). For example, the majority of women academicians are clustered at the assistant lecturer and lecturer levels in the Commonwealth countries and the United Kingdom (Deem et al., 2000;

UNESCO, 2002), which are the bottom two rankings in the British higher education academic ranking system.

Several researchers attempted to explain why women are situated in lower leadership positions by presenting different reasons. One of these explanations is that low-level management positions are no longer perceived as prestigious occupations because of low salaries, and because men are not interested in these positions due to the modified descriptions which have now added teaching and financial tasks (Deem et al., 2000). Another reason is that women find it difficult to reach and hold high-ranking positions because the values and norms in these positions are perceived as masculine. So, if a woman decides to pursue a senior management position she is forced to adopt masculine attitudes and behaviors which are different from her natural style to be able to succeed (Shain, 2000). Deem et al. (2000) and Shain (2000) explained that women occupy these lower ranks because they are more willing to "carry the burden" of teaching, researching, performing administrative duties and taking care of the household (Shain, 2000, p. 219). Lastly, the findings in Leathwood's (2005) research study revealed that women are unwilling to deliberately apply and pursue high-ranking leadership positions. The women in the study stated that they felt that their work was undervalued, that they lacked the basic skills and felt inefficient, that they are usually blamed for mistakes, that they were not listened to and were not informed about events and changes occurring in the university. Shain (2000) attempted to explain women's unwillingness to apply for promotion by stating that women feared losing their current positions.

Since more women are holding low and middle rank leadership positions, it seems that these positions are feminized. The Cambridge Dictionary defined feminization as a process where a situation is currently attributed to females when previously it was dominated by males. There are two different reasons for explaining this feminization process. The first

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explanation is that there is a significant increase in the number of women holding these low-ranking leadership positions compared to their male counterparts which seems that females are "taking over" the institution and "boys and men are 'losing out' (Leathwood & Read, 2008, p. 7 & 3; Peterson, 2016). The second reason is the changes, particularly the social and economic, that have occurred in higher education institutions. The social change that universities have witnessed is the acceptance and adoption of feminine values such as care and cooperation (Leathwood & Read, 2008; Shain, 2000). As for the changes in the economy, it is hiring of women to perform the same job as the men but with a lower salary (Deem et al., 2000). Due to these changes, there were more women working in universities and holding low and middle-level leadership positions (Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the case of Lebanese women educational leaders' experiences and to explore their perspectives on 1) the external factors that positively and negatively influenced them to obtain formal leadership positions in higher education, and 2) the personal endeavors of women leaders who attained formal leadership positions in university. To accomplish the aims of this study, this research will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the factors that hinder women from obtaining formal leadership positions in higher education?

2. What are the factors that facilitate women's ascension to leadership positions in higher education?

3. What are the deliberate actions/endeavors that women educational leaders undertake to obtain a formal leadership position?

4. In what ways does formal training affect women leaders in their attainment to formal leadership positions in higher education?

Rationale of the Study

Although women have entered the workforce and are almost equally represented as men, the majority of these women are found to occupy lower and middle-rank positions while there are very few in high-ranking positions (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). This phenomenon is also illustrated in higher education institutions because women are indeed underrepresented in senior leadership positions (Hannum et al., 2015). Universities benefit from having women in high-ranking positions because they offer a different perspective than men and allow for greater diversity within educational institutions (Carter, 2009; Hannum et al. 2015; World Economic Forum, 2015). Not only are women underrepresented in leadership positions in universities, but there are limited research studies conducted in the Western contexts that have explored the lives of the exceptional women who were able to hold and sustain high-ranking positions in higher education institutions (Cheung & Halpern 2010; Madsen, 2007). Similarly, there is a dearth of research studies about the journeys of women leaders in universities in the Arab region (Akar & Mouchantaf, 2013). According to Morley (2005a), only a few qualitative research studies explore women's experiences in higher education institutions in developing countries. The few researchers (Afiouni & Karam, 2014; Akar & Mouchantaf, 2013; Jamali et al., 2005) who have conducted such studies in Lebanon recommend future researches to explore the experiences of women leaders specifically to uncover additional challenges and facilitators that they have faced.

Accordingly, the stance of research studies in the Western contexts are in stage 4 while those in the Middle Eastern region are in stage 3 as per Charol Shakeshaft's (1999)

model of "Stages of Research on Women and Gender". Shakeshaft (1999) devised this model to explain the historical progression of research on women. In the first stage, the aim of the research studies would be to document the number of women in administrative positions. The purpose of the research studies in the second stage would be documenting the characteristics and demographic information of women in administrative positions in addition to their stories as women administrators. In the third stage, the aim of the studies would be to explore the reasons behind women's underrepresentation in administrative positions and reveal the challenges that women face when attempting to attain the administrative positions. The goal of the researches in the fourth stage would be to investigate the lives and experiences of women administrators to understand their perspectives on educational administration. In the fifth stage, the aim of the research studies would be to determine the influence of having women administrators in educational settings. Lastly, the goal of the research studies in the sixth stage would be to understand the perspectives of both men and women administrators to reformulate theories to include women's perspectives in educational administration.

In the U.S., research on women leaders in educational settings is in stage 4 of the "Stages of Research on Women and Gender" model because currently the aim of the studies is to explore the experiences of women leaders in universities. Since this research stage is incomplete, researchers are recommending future studies to investigate the facilitators or positive stories of women who have attained high-ranking positions in universities (Airini et al., 2011; Hannum et al., 2015). On the other hand, the research studies about women leaders in the Middle East region are in stage 3 of Shakeshaft's (1999) model because scholars are recommending additional studies to investigate the constraints that women face in attaining formal leadership positions (Akar & Mouchantaf, 2013; Jamali et al., 2005).

It is not possible to transfer the findings of the Western studies to the Arab region so that the research studies worldwide about women leaders in educational settings have the

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same stance. It is not feasible to do so because of the different cultural contexts. Hallinger (1995) explained that scholars cannot apply Western theories to other cultures and contexts without critiquing the theories' "cultural salience and validity" to the non-Western culture (p. 4). This is because each culture is unique by its varying degree of strength or weakness in the four dimensions mentioned which include power dimension, uncertainty avoidance, individualism or collectivism, and masculinity (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). For example, a theory describing a highly-valued phenomenon that is applied to one culture cannot be explained in another culture because it is a taboo.

Therefore, the research study at hand will explore the experiences of women leaders in a university in Lebanon by investigating the challenges, facilitators, deliberate actions that they undertook, and whether formal training enabled them to hold and sustain their high-ranking positions. This study is adopting this aim for three reasons. First, the study at hand will be answering the recommendations of the Lebanese scholars by further exploring the challenges and describing the facilitators that women leaders experienced. Second, this research study attempts to cover the knowledge gap in the Arab region about the journeys of women leaders in universities. Lastly, the study at hand hopes to help progress the stance of the Arab region research studies from the third to the fourth stage of Shakeshaft's (1999) model.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand women's representation in formal leadership positions in higher education institutions, a review of the literature has been conducted. This chapter is divided into four sections with an aim to discuss the available research studies about women leaders in higher education institutions. The first section will explain the perspective that was used to explore the current research study. The second and third sections will be discussing the available research studies that have been conducted on women leaders in higher education institutions and in various occupations. Particularly, the second section will identify the external factors that have negatively and positively influenced women leaders' attainment and retention of their high-ranking positions. The third section will discuss the internal factors which include the deliberate actions and personal motivators for women to reach and hold their leadership positions in universities. Lastly, the fourth section will present the theoretical background which the current research study is grounded in.

Feminist Perspective

The study at hand will be using the feminist perspective to explore the phenomenon of the exceptional women leaders who are in high-ranking positions in a higher educational institution. Accordingly, this section will define and explain feminism and how the feminist movements facilitated in achieving the feminist goals. Next, the feminist perspective in research will be explained. Then, the influence of feminism in educational administration and leadership will be discussed. Lastly, the methodological approaches employed by research studies that adopted the feminist perspective will also be explained.

Feminism does not have a unified and clear definition (Haslanger et al., 2015). Some scholars such as Haslanger et al. (2015) and Renzetti (2008) explained feminism from the social and political facets. The social meaning of feminism is "the belief in and advocacy of equal rights for women based on the idea of the equality of sexes" (Haslanger et al., 2015). Politically, it is using movements to obtain the goals of feminism. On the other hand, bell hooks (2000) defined feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. viii). Since there are these two different perspectives on feminism, bell hooks (2000) labelled those who wanted to achieve gender equality as reformists and those that "wanted to transform that system, to bring an end to patriarchy and sexism" as revolutionary feminist thinkers (p. 4).

Although the reformist and revolutionary feminists disagreed on the meaning of feminism, both groups believed that through a feminist movement they can achieve their goals. The following is how the feminist movement emerged in the Western contexts. Females in various locations began to rebel against sexism, then they met and started discussing feminism which led to the creation of women's liberation which is the "collective rebellion" that later evolved into the feminist movement (hooks, 2015, p. xii). Specifically, in the United States, the development of the feminist movement passed through three generations. The first began between the late 19th and early 20th century when women struggled to obtain their legal rights, and particularly the right to vote (Byers & Crocker, 2011). The first-wave feminist movement also influenced education because females were encouraged to study STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) subjects while males literary and humanities disciplines (Weiner, 2004). After obtaining the right to vote, the second-generation feminist movement emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s that aimed to bring forth equal social, educational and professional opportunities to women as men (Byers & Crocker, 2011). During this period, several feminist perspectives emerged

such as "liberalism, Marxism, socialism, and psychoanalytical theory" that developed their own ideas on how to eliminate women's oppression but based their work on the "well-established Western political theories" (Mack-Canty, 2004, p.157). Once more, the second-wave feminist movement affected education because females began challenging the curricula, texts, and the hidden curriculum that is biased towards males (Weiner, 2004). Because women of color, third-world women, and homosexuals were different from the White, middle-class, college-educated female, they were unable to voice their experiences in the second-wave feminist movement (Mack-Canty, 2004). Because the different facets of oppression were not represented in the second-wave feminist movement, the third-wave emerged in the 1990s (Bryers & Crocker, 2011; Ferraro, 2010; Mack-Canty, 2004). According to Mack-Canty (2004), the third-wave feminist movement still exists which is expressed through different forms of feminisms such as generational, postcolonial, and ecofeminism.

The Arab region also witnessed feminist movements. Similar to the Western region, the Arab feminist movements were also closely linked to the political movements that occurred in the Arab region (Sayigh, 2003). However, the Arab and Western feminist movements were different because they emerged from different settings (Shaaban, 2003). The Arab region was characterized as discontinuous and instable because of colonization, attempts to become independent countries, creation of new states, external and internal wars, and the existence of the different economical classes (Sayigh, 2004). Another difference between the two feminist movements is that the Arab women are entrenched in their national, local, and religious identities because of their strong attachment to their communities and culture (Sayigh, 2004). For example, Arab women participated in the feminist movement to fight for their right to unveil which was a cultural norm in the Arab countries.

The Arab feminist movement described is based on Fawwaz Traboulsi's (2003) narrative because he is one of the very few scholars who have explored this phenomenon (Sayigh, 2003). The emergence of the Arab feminist movements followed the following path in Egypt, Fertile Crescent, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Oman: women receiving an education, then, participating in the liberation of their countries followed by establishing associations, societies or unions to fight for their rights because they were dismissed during their countries' liberation movements. The feminist movements in the Gulf countries followed a different a path although it also began by women receiving an education. The females in the Gulf countries did not have to liberate their countries. Accordingly, it was very difficult and almost impossible for women to demand their political rights. Thus, the women's societies, associations, and unions that emerged in the Gulf countries aimed at only improving the welfare of the societies.

Both Arab men and women were active players in the creation of the Arab feminist movement. Male intellects such as Butrus Al-Bustani, Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, Qasim Amin, and Tahir Haddad believed that women's status should change by advocating for women's rights mainly in obtaining an education, working, and eliminating their inferior status in society during the Al-Nahda movement which began in the late 19th and early 20th century (Trabousli, 2003). They were able to achieve the right for women to receive an education including higher educational degrees. For example, the American University of Beirut in Lebanon first admitted female students in 1924 (AUB, 2017) and in the Egyptian universities in 1928 (Traboulsi, 2003). Concurrent to the Al-Nahda movement, between 1892 and 1940, females were writing and printing their own journals; examples of topics published were women expressing their voices, discussing gender discrimination, political and national movements, urging women to change their inferior societal status, and adopting their Western feminist counterparts as role models while taking into consideration the cultural differences

(Shaaban, 2003). These journals were very popular and reached a diverse audience in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq (Shaaban, 2003). Before World War I, there were 25 female journals in the Arab region (Shaaban, 2003). The "women's press" instilled in the minds of its audience the need to change the status quo of women in the Arab region (Shaaban, 2003, p.10). According to Shabaan (2003), these female journals succeeded because in 1928, the Arab women's union was established with a clear pan-Arab vision. Also, women's press was able to positively influence the lives of women in the Arab region by for example allowing Egyptian women into the workforce and Arab women to unveil in the public sphere (Trabousli, 2003). Then, women in Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco participated in national liberation movements to free their countries from colonization after World War II (Trabousli, 2003). According to Traboulsi (2003), the women expected that after they aided in liberating their countries they can then demand for their rights; however, they were forced back to the confinement of their homes to be wives and mothers. Despite this disappointment, women were able to fight for their rights and were granted free schooling for all, amendments in familial laws such as the minimum age of marriage and abolishing polygamy, and minimum political rights in Lebanon and Egypt to vote in 1952 and 1956 (Traboulsi, 2003). The "new feminists", especially after 1967, were dissatisfied with the gains achieved; they still had to fight against the repression of women's sexuality and the dominance and power that males exert on females (Trabousli, 2003). Unfortunately, since then and particularly during the 1980s the Arab feminist movement backwardly progressed because women had to fight for the same rights as those expressed during the Al-Nahda movement but in a different era such as segregation, women entering the workforce, and obtaining political and legal rights (Traboulsi, 2003). Traboulsi (2003) believes that currently there is no advancement in women's liberation because the Arab regimes are using it as a scapegoat for the frustration and problems in the Arab society.

Bell hooks (2015) postulates that not having a solid framework – feminist theory – will negatively affect the influence of the feminist movement: "Without liberatory feminist theory, there can be no effective feminist movement" (p. 35). However, the feminist movement and theory are intertwined and the movement does not have a unified framework, also a unified feminist theory does not exist because each feminist scholar defines the theory differently (Blackmore, 1989). For example, MacKinnon (1989) believes that the feminist theory is based on the individual's political orientation of being a liberal, socialist, or radical feminism which influences how the theory is used in analyzing, organizing, and practically applying the concepts (as cited in Glazer, 1991). According to Blackmore (1989), the feminist theory is not only about obtaining equality, it is also about women being able to set their own measures and criteria. Bell hooks (2015) defined the feminist theory as a dynamic feminist lens that is used to examine the society by taking into consideration the differences in gender, race, and class.

Feminist Research

Females had to fight to be able to express and assert their voices, experiences, and points of view. In addition, the androcentric perspective - "viewing the world and shaping reality through the male lens" - was viewed as the universal truth where the standards and norms were based on the male's experiences neglecting the values and beliefs of other groups such as women and people of color (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 325). Furthermore, because the androcentric perspective was dominant, theories, methodologies and policies are usually biased towards men (Shakeshaft, 1989). Accordingly, the feminist perspective emerged to include the female voice which is considered a new way to interpret theories, concepts, and research (Glazer, 1991) and to which question the representativeness of the knowledge base by suggesting a new paradigm. This new paradigm understands, articulates and works from a gendered perspective and includes the political dimension in the knowledge base (Blackmore,

1996). Adopting a feminist perspective constitutes a paradigm shift. The aim of feminist research is to describe women's experiences (Castiello Jones & Budig, 2008; Glazer, 1991; Letherby, 2003; Shakeshaft, 1999). Feminist research is concerned with the what, how, and why (Letherby, 2003) and questions the assumptions, values and beliefs from the perspective of women (Glazer, 1991).

Feminism in Educational Administration

Because scholars acknowledged that research in educational administration was adopting the androcentric perspective, by the mid-1970s, the feminist perspective in research caught the interests of many scholars and resulted in a growing body of studies that explored women's experiences in educational administration (Shakeshaft, 1999). Since then, there has been a positive shift in the research on women in educational administration which prevailed in three aspects. First, research studies acknowledged that theories and concepts applied to gender, race and class are not universal due to contextual differences (Blackmore, 1996). Second, the feminist characteristics of morality and care have also been positively considered within the field of educational administration. These added characteristics imply that the field of educational administration has become more inclusive of the female perspective. Lastly, the feminist concepts have been linked to the non-feminist concepts to obtain "contemporary social, political and cultural theory" (Blackmore, 1996, p. 999).

This paradigm shift to adopt the feminist perspective is needed because feminist scholars have been calling for a reconstructed view of the knowledge base in educational administration. Researchers believe that a paradigm shift in educational administration is needed for three reasons. First, women's experiences, values and beliefs are different than those of men (Glazer, 1991; Shakeshaft, 1995). This difference influences how they perceive teaching and administration and is manifested in difference between the male and female's

leadership styles, opinions, and characteristics. In addition, understanding the differences between the genders will help explain the positive and negative effects of interactions men and women have on the organization's dynamic (Shakeshaft, 1989). Also, understanding women's points of views will inform the field on whether and to what extent being a female facilitates or impedes a woman educational administrator (Shakeshaft, 1989). Thus, including women's experiences will expand the knowledge base in educational administration by providing another and different point of view (Shakeshaft, 1995). Second, women should be autonomously able to choose the methodologies, criteria, and measurement tools that most fit their situations and experiences when they are studying a phenomenon or are being studied (Blackmore, 1989). Also, the research studies should take into consideration the different cultural and historical contexts when exploring a phenomenon (Blackmore, 1989,). Third, the females' inferior status of being subordinates should be eliminated in educational administration (Blackmore, 1989).

Feminism in Educational Leadership

Because of the male dominance on women in society, the norms of the behaviors, traits and characteristics of individuals in leadership positions are masculine. Moreover, feminist scholars point out that studies have only been conducted on men in formal leadership positions, where the masculine experience is perceived to be universal and the norm (Blackmore, 1989). In view of that, Blackmore (1989) suggests a reconstruction of leadership to include the feminist perspective for several reasons. One of the reasons is that leadership is a communal activity which includes a relationship between the individual and the community, rather than one that is solely based on hierarchy (Blackmore, 1989). This leadership characteristic is also a female trait which illustrates that leadership should not exclusively be attributed to males. Another reason is that in leadership, power should be viewed from different perspectives, needs to be viewed as multi-directional, and "practiced in

different contexts by different people" which implies that groups other than the White middle-class men should hold leadership positions (Blackmore, 1989). Lastly, Blackmore (1989, 1996) perceives that leadership should empower individuals to be able to achieve outcomes that can only be obtained through teamwork. Blackmore's (1989) reconstruction of leadership describes characteristics and leadership styles that are greatly reflected in women leaders.

Feminist Perspective in Methodology

Research studies need to adopt epistemologies and methodological approaches because they would guide in conducting the researches. Studies that use the feminist perspective to study a phenomenon adopt the interpretivist epistemology where knowledge is obtained from the subject's experiences and perception of reality. Feminist perspective incorporates women's experience and reject the positivist epistemology which states that knowledge should be constructed from direct observations or experimentations (Blackmore, 1996). The literature also reveals that feminists favor the standpoint epistemology (Best, 2008; Gosetti & Rosch, 1994 as cited in Blackmore, 1996), which states that knowledge claims are influenced by history, society, culture, and the "biography of the knower" (Best, 2008, p. 897). Based on this assumption, knowledge production begins with women's experiences and works outwards to the organization and society. This epistemology also investigates the contradictions, "asks different questions, raises different issues and tests the theories" (Blackmore, 1996, p.1003). Feminists prefer the interpretivist and standpoint assumptions because they are aligned with the aim of feminism to include women's perspectives.

As for the research studies' methodological approaches, feminists usually employ the qualitative in-depth interviews when studying a phenomenon (De Laine, 2000). They also use

action research and participatory action research but they prefer the latter (De Laine, 2000).

According to Shakeshaft, feminists who study women administrators in education also use

surveys, experimental and quasi-experimental studies, interviews, observations, analysis of

theories, and action research as methodological approaches (Shakeshaft, 1999). This

indicates that research studies that adopt the feminist perspective do not have a certain

methodology approach, they apply the methodology that most suitably answers their

research questions. For example, feminists use surveys to document the numbers of women

in educational administration and interviews, surveys and observation to explore women's

perceptions and perspectives on the field of educational administration.

External Factors that Influenced Women's Representation in Formal Leadership Positions in Higher Education Institutions

The feminist perspective that is adopted to explore the phenomenon under study has

been described. Next, the literature reviewed will be presented in two main sections: the

external and internal factors that play a significant role in enhancing women's representation

in formal educational leadership positions. The study at hand adopts Tomàs et al. (2010)

classification of these factors into external and internal factors. External factors stem from the

environment, whereas the internal aspects are "behaviors and attitudes that women tend to

exhibit as a social collective" (Tomàs et al., 2010, p. 489). In this literature review, the

external factors are perceived as the uncontrollable situations that negatively (challenges) or

positively (facilitators) influence women's ascension into formal leadership positions. On the

other hand, the internal factors are women's deliberate actions to obtain high-ranking

positions. Two of these personal endeavors include involvement in formal training and

women's personal motivational factors. The information reported from these sections will aid

in interpreting this study's findings.

Women's attainment to formal leadership positions is greatly influenced by the obstacles that these women face. By reviewing the available literature, it was evident that a significant number of research was conducted in the Western, Middle Eastern, African and South Asian contexts to explore the challenges women leaders face in different occupations. Accordingly, the section below will discuss the most prominent obstacles that women leaders faced while ascending the career ladder.

Challenges Faced by Women Leaders

To understand the reasons for women's underrepresentation and to explore the challenges in formal leadership positions in higher education, the Western and Middle Eastern literature was reviewed to investigate the challenges faced by women leaders in higher education and other occupations. Although other challenges do exist, nine obstacles were found to be most prevalent. These challenges will be presented below.

Patriarchal Nature of the Institution. A significant number of the research studies explored revealed that one of the prevalent challenges faced by women leaders in ascending the career ladder is the patriarchal nature of the institution. Patriarchy is defined as the assumption that males are superior to females and that they are expected to always be in control and exert their power to their advantage (hooks, 2000; Cambridge Dictionary). Specifically, two institutional components are perceived as biased towards males and are reinforcing the masculine dominance in the organization which is impeding women from advancing in their careers.

The first institutional component is the organization's culture. Culture can be defined as the set of shared values and beliefs highly valued by the members in the organization which distinguishes them from other organizations (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002). Research conducted by Armenti (2004), Leathwood & Read (2008), Morley (2014), Roos and Gatta,

(2009), Tlaiss and Kauser (2010), Tlaiss and Kauser (2011), Tomàs et al. (2010), and White (2003) revealed that the universities' culture is male dominant. Bailyn (2003) explained that the values and beliefs adopted by members of the institution are based on male perceptions and norms. Four examples are presented to describe how the university's culture is biased towards males. The first example, is the fact that the reward system in a university values the masculine attributes. Academicians are rewarded by being promoted for their merit such as the quantity and quality of their research. This reward system favors male academicians because they naturally only focus on their research unlike their female counterparts who are committed to serve and work hard for their department, faculty and university (White, 2003).

The second instance is the fact that what is considered as norm of the behavior of the members in the institution is biased towards males. White (2003) found that in Australian universities, academicians have to be competitive and individualistic to ascend the career ladder. However, this type of competitiveness and individualism is masculine in nature, as females are perceived to be less competitive and to care for one another (White, 2003).

Another example, the third, is preserving the university's status quo of having men in leadership positions. The results of the study conducted by Roos and Gatta (2009) indicate that universities hired male faculty members as senior academicians, while female faculty members were only hired as assistant professors. This disproportionate hiring of males into vacant senior positions indicates that universities are supporting men to continue being in control and powerful positions.

The fourth instance is the career path of academicians is based on the experiences and lives of men. A research conducted by Armenti (2004) revealed that the "timeframe for career development" and the beliefs about "family commitments and biological differences" are biased towards males. This is because at the age of 35, male academicians apply for

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promotions, while female academicians start families (Armenti, 2004, p.77-78). She further indicated that for women to become members of a university's culture, they have to "behave like men by conforming to the expectations of the university which assume that family commitments and biological differences should remain separate from academic careers" (p. 78).

The second institutional component that is biased towards males which impedes women's career advancement is the university's enacted policies and procedures which include tenure, promotion, evaluation and hiring (Bailyn, 2003; Bain & Cummings, 2000; Jamali et al., 2005; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; Roos & Gatta, 2009; Tomàs et al., 2010; UNESCO, 2002). Jamali et al. (2005) provide examples of how these institutions' policies and procedures are biased towards men. The researchers provide several statements that indicate that organizations treat males preferentially. First, institutions prefer to hire and promote males. Second, men's salaries are higher than women's salaries although they occupy the same positions. Third, women are not given access to professional development opportunities, women are excluded from power networks, women do not have role models, childcare facilities, arrangements and flexible working hours (Metz, 2003; Yoo, 2003; Li & Leung, 2001; Okanlawon, 1994; Adebowale, 1994 as cited in Jamali et al., 2005).

Other procedures, such as evaluation and promotion, also favor men over women. For instance, studies conducted by Bailyn (2003), Morley and Crossouard (2016), and Tomàs et al. (2010) reveal that universities' evaluation/promotion policies favor men over women. The evaluation and promotion policy requires a faculty member to first be up-to-date in his or her research, to teach and to service the institution (Armenti, 2004). However, although these policies should apply across the board, female faculty members were found to carry a heavier teaching load, a greater number of students to advice, and limited resources to conduct their research, while males were given more resources to conduct their research, fewer courses to

teach, and fewer students to advice (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Morley, 2014). Under these circumstances, it becomes more difficult for women to succeed in their evaluation and promotion because they tend to lag behind, especially when it comes to the most important criteria, which is research.

Similarly, studies conducted in Arab countries recognize the impeding influence of universities' policies and procedures specifically the lack of institutional support and the biased promotion criteria against women. Afiouni and Karam's (2014) study highlights that the absence of childcare arrangements, flexible working hours, and/or family friendly initiatives in universities do not take into consideration women's priorities to cater to the needs of their families. As such, the lack of this form of support constitutes a structural obstacle that impedes women in their attempt to attain formal leadership positions. Since women academicians do not have access to institutional support, they are unable to sufficiently focus on their research due to their familial demands. Accordingly, female academicians publish fewer research studies than their male counterparts which may negatively influence their promotion because research is an important criterion.

Contrarily, further examination of international literature reveal that researchers reached an opposite conclusion. In the Western context, there were two research studies (Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Leisyte & Hosch-Dayican, 2016) that revealed that women academicians perceived their universities' policies and procedures, specifically the promotion guidelines, as gender neutral and viewed them to not discriminate against females or males. Consequently, the literature review shows that results on bias toward men in evaluation and promotion procedures are inconclusive.

Although a few research studies reported that the universities' policies and procedures are unbiased towards females, the majority of the studies explored revealed otherwise. In

addition, research studies explicitly indicated that the institution's culture is male dominant. Accordingly, for women in academia to overcome the patriarchal nature of the institution they have to either adapt to the masculine values and beliefs or attempt to change the university's culture (White, 2003).

Exclusion from Formal and Informal Networks. Every institution has a formal and informal structure. A common model of a formal structure is the Weberian bureaucratic model, which comprises of division of labor, impersonality, hierarchy of authority, rules and regulations, and career orientation (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In a formal structure, the mode of communication and relationships built between the members follow the institution's organizational chart. An informal structure, on the other hand, consists of a web of relations that emerges as a result of interactions among members within all the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Both the formal and informal structures are reflected in networks but with different characteristics, where the former relies on the organizational chart while the latter is based on members informally creating channels of communication. Because the informal network is based on interpersonal relations, facts, opinions, orders, and rumors "flow freely and rapidly" between the members in the network (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 406). As a result, belonging to an informal network is critical for members of any institution because they would be members of a group that would be sharing information that is not necessary available in the formal network.

Afiouni and Karam (2014), Al-Lamky (2006), Bain and Cummings (2000), BlackChen (2015), Carter (2009), Diehl (2014), Hannum et al. (2015), Metcalfe (2006), UNESCO (2002), and White (2003) found that women's exclusion from informal networks impedes them from attaining formal leadership positions in any institution. BlackChen (2015) explains that when women are excluded from senior faculty informal networks, they missed those symbiotic relationships, which channel critical information their way and which are

essential for female leaders as they are groomed to gain access and become leaders in their institutions. The findings in Odejide's (2003) research study align with this conclusion. This study revealed that the majority of women in Nigeria were appointed to leadership positions through nomination. These nominations indicate that these Nigerian women were well-connected and were members of a formal or informal network. Therefore, these researchers recommended that to increase women's representation in formal leadership positions, women have to belong to an informal network to strengthen their relationships with their senior colleagues who will in turn support their leadership.

Overload of Work in the Academic Profession. Researchers found that the overload of work in the academic profession impedes female faculty members who attempt to reach senior academic positions in higher education institutions (Afiouni & Karam, (2014); Armenti, 2004; Bailyn, 2003; Nakitende, 2012; Tessens et al., 2011). Bailyn (2003) explained that numerous responsibilities are expected from all faculty members such as teaching, research, advising, and course development. Faculty members are also expected to perform administrative responsibilities, such as servicing the department/faculty/university, strategic program planning and maintaining the business structure of the departmental unit. The result of Armenti's (2004) study indicated that the overload of work was especially detrimental for female faculty members because, in addition to their academic and administrative tasks, they juggle their family responsibilities with long working hours and a demanding job. However, these results remain inconclusive as the findings of Jacobs and Winslow's (2004) study indicate that faculty members (males and females) who have families did not perceive an overload of work in their academic profession.

The overall review shows that the results on whether the overload of work in the academic profession impedes female faculty members, especially women who balance work and familial needs from attaining senior positions in universities, are inconclusive.

Women's Low Research Profile. For faculty members to be promoted within the academic positions, they are evaluated mostly by the number of originally produced research work (Armenti, 2004; Leathwood & Read, 2008). The reliance on research as a central criterion in evaluation creates gender discrimination as women tend to focus their academic efforts to teach and service the profession and university rather than on researching and publishing articles (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Morley, 2014; UNESCO, 2002). Moreover, Armenti (2004) and Bain and Cummings (2000) found that one of the reasons for women's low research publication is their strong familial commitments, which limits the time they have to produce research. Therefore, the results of the studies indicate that women's low research profile obstructs their ascension to senior leadership positions in universities as the main criteria for advancement is research (Armenti, 2004; Bain & Cummings, 2000; BlackChen, 2015; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Leathwood & Read, 2008; Morley, 2014; Tessens et al., 2011).

Balancing Demands of Work and Family. Though many women are career oriented and strive for career advancement, they still have to balance their work with their duties at home. These women have to maintain an equilibrium between their work and their families (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004). The demands at home include taking care of children, husband and family members. Many researchers found that balancing the demands of work and family is a challenge for women, which impedes their ascension to formal leadership positions in higher education universities (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Al-Lamky, 2006; Armenti, 2004; BlackChen, 2015; Diehl, 2014; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Karam et al. 2013; Morley, 2005a; Morley, 2014; Nakitende, 2012; Tessens et al., 2011; Tomàs et al., 2010). The studies revealed a unique dimension to this obstacle in the Middle Eastern and African contexts. The primary reason that Middle Eastern and African women perceive balancing the demands of work and family as a challenge, is the society's expectation and gender stereotype, which

states that the female is first a wife, mother, and then a career woman (Al-Lamky, 2006 & Jamali et al., 2005; Morley, 2005a). Women are seen as the core of the family, the person who holds the "heavy weight of customs and traditions" by being the parent who gets called when the child is sick, who is portrayed in school books doing household chores, and who is obliged to attend social engagements (Al-Lamky, 2006, p. 60). Although Lebanese women in managerial positions in Tlaiss and Kauser's (2011) research study supported the finding that society expects a female to be a wife and mother and lastly a career woman, interestingly, these women did not state that marriage and family responsibilities as complete obstructions to their careers' progression, rather they considered these responsibilities as slowing their pace.

In the Western context, women's perception of the difficulty of balancing the demands of work and family consists of finding the most suitable time to start a family and to raise children. This is because the average age at which faculty members apply for tenure coincides with the time they usually start a family (Armenti, 2004). Accordingly, the faculty member has to choose to either advance in her career or to focus on her family. Similarly, the results of Acker and Armenti (2004) indicate that faculty members plan the timing of their childbirth in May or June as to not interfere with the academic calendar.

Female faculty members in Tomàs et al.'s (2010) research study revealed that they did not receive help in caring for their families. This absence of help impedes these working women from attaining formal leadership positions. Therefore, there is agreement that the challenge of balancing the demands between work and family hinders women's advancement to formal leadership positions because it implies that women's complete attention, focus, and time are not dedicated to work.

Gender Stereotypes. Gender stereotypes can be explained as the generalized views people create about men and women, which influences our perception of men and women's behaviors such as women's nurturing versus men's analytical abilities (Roos & Gatta, 2009). Gender stereotyping exists in the society and organizations such as education institutions. For example, women are stereotyped as emotional and obedient being, as not having the ambition to be powerful within the university, as assuming "traditional gender responsibilities", which are prioritized over their academic work, and as being geographically restricted, which means that they cannot travel to attend a conference and leave their families (Jamali et al., 2005; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; Tomàs et al., 2010; Afiouni & Karam, 2014). The result of this gender stereotype is manifested in the small number of women in formal leadership positions in higher education institutions (Roos & Gatta, 2009; Tomàs et al., 2010) Accordingly, the research studies of Afiouni and Karam (2014), BlackChen (2015), Diehl (2014), Hannum et al. (2015), Jamali et al. (2005), Morley and Crossouard (2016), Nakitende (2012), Roos and Gatta (2009), and Tlaiss and Kauser (2011), Tomàs et al. (2010) indicate that gender stereotype is an obstacle that women face when attempting to ascend the career ladder. Afiouni and Karam (2014) and Jamali et al., (2005) suggest that to reduce gender stereotyping, the institution must spread gender awareness, which could influence the institution's culture and which would enable women to grow, develop, and attain formal leadership positions.

Societal Expectations. An obstacle that seems to be more prominent in the Arab countries is the societal expectations of the traditional female roles. These societies are predominantly patriarchal (Odejide, 2003; Morley, 2014). Thus, the cultural value implies that men are the breadwinners and women are the homemakers (Jamali et al., 2005). Society expects woman to only carry out the roles and responsibilities of being a wife, mother, and homemaker. When the woman decides to work and aspire for leadership positions, it is

perceived as a taboo because she assumes a purely male role, which involves working and being a leader. Accordingly, women in formal leadership positions face a bigger challenge, which involves balancing the dual roles and responsibilities of work and home. Studies by Al-Ahmadi (2011), Al-Lamky (2006) and Karam et al. (2013) support the finding that socio-cultural expectations in the Arab world obstruct women from attaining formal leadership positions in universities. Women were found to be challenged and misunderstood by their children, colleagues, family, friends, and husbands for attempting to advance in their careers instead of being a mother and/or wife (Karam et al., 2013).

Lack of Empowerment. Researchers report that even when women are promoted to formal leadership positions, they are assigned the title, office, and partial duties but not the authority and power. This is viewed as an example of a lack of empowerment, especially when women do not have the authority and power, when they are not involved in critical organizational decision-making processes, when they are not given access to the necessary information and knowledge, and when their voices are not heard in university meetings (Morley, 2006b). The effect of the lack of empowerment on individuals is significant because it influences their feelings of belongingness to the institution as well their perceptions of the organization's appreciation of their work and their importance to the organization (Effendi, 2003 as cited in Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Al-Ahmadi (2011), Bain and Cummings (2000), BlackChen (2015), Blackmore and Sachs (2000), and Davis (2012) reveal in their research that the lack of empowerment is considered a challenge for women attempting to obtain formal leadership positions in higher education institutions. The findings in Blackmore and Sachs' (2000) study also reveal that women believed that the absence of empowerment as a paradox because they "felt that they were not accorded the same privileges and access to information that their senior male colleagues had access to. So, while to the external eye they had power, the reality was they were institutionally powerless" (p. 13).

In the Middle Eastern region, Al-Ahmadi (2011) defined the lack of empowerment as not having access to the necessary resources to become leaders and to develop professionally. Al-Ahmadi (2011) explained that Saudi Arabian women do not have mentors, have not seen other women behave in similar leadership positions, and do not have networks (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Not having these resources impedes the women leaders' work because not having mentors implies that the Saudi women are not receiving advice and support to help them overcome the obstacles in their leadership positions. Also, because Saudi women leaders did not have female role models, they had to pave their own ways to be able to succeed in their high-ranking positions. Lastly, not belonging to a network impedes the women leaders' work because they would not have access to necessary information. The lack of empowerment has been perceived and defined differently by the Western and Middle Eastern regions. However, it is still an obstacle that women have to overcome to ascend to senior leadership positions.

Lack of Resources. The lack of resources is perceived as another challenge by women, in both Western and Eastern countries, attempting to ascend the career ladder in higher education. Women are not awarded sufficient research funds, grants and equipment, which are vital resources to ascend the career ladder in higher education. As per the research studies of Al-Ahmadi (2011), Blackmore and Sachs (2000), and Bain and Cummings (2000), women are deprived financially from research grants and funds and from research equipment. In addition, women in higher education institutions in several Commonwealth countries stated that they were deprived from access to training and professional development, which they also considered to be a lack of resource (Morley, 2006b; Morley, 2014). Bain and Cummings (2000) stated that women do not have adequate research facilities, which causes women to receive fewer research grants, which in turn hinders their promotion to senior positions. As for the lack of resources in the Middle East and specifically in Saudi Arabia, Al-Ahmadi's (2011) research study revealed that the Saudi women administrators have

"limited financial powers granted to the departments of women, inadequate buildings and facilities, inadequate physical equipment and technology available, lack of financial resources and poor training on the use of technologies", which hindered their ascension to formal leadership positions (p. 155).

Sexual Harassment. In the reviewed literature, research studies conducted in Africa and South Asia revealed that sexual harassment is one of the obstacles that disallowed women from being visible and advancing in their careers in higher education institutions as students, faculty and staff members (Morley, 2005a; Morley, 2005b; Morley, 2006a; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; UNESCO, 2002). Sexual harassment acts are not usually discussed because it is perceived a "dangerous act" in the Commonwealth countries (Morley, 2005a; Morley, 2005b). Indeed, only two reviewed studies briefly indicated sexual harassment acts that female students and faculty members encountered. For example, male lecturers would ask female students questions and laugh at them when they did not know the answers (Morley, 2006a; Morley & Crossouard, 2016) and sometimes stare at the students in an odd manner (Morley, 2006a). Female lecturers are also oftentimes sexually harassed, stalked on campus, (Morley & Crossouard, 2016) and perceived as incompetent academicians by male students (Morley, 2006a). Unfortunately, research show that when females are faced with sexual harassment acts on campus, they do not know how to react to the situation (Morley, 2005b; Morley, 2006a) as universities often lack affirmative actions to reduce and eliminate sexual harassment (Morley, 2005a).

Morley (2005a) believes that women are sexually harassed because they violate the traditional gender role of females which includes staying at home and taking care of the family. It seems that the consequence of the act in the Commonwealth countries is women being abused psychologically, verbally, and physically. Since female students, faculty and

staff members are sexually harassed on campus and the university is unable to protect them, these women are hesitant to enter, be visible, and advance in their careers.

Summary. The literature review discussed the reasons for women's underrepresentation in formal leadership positions in higher education. The reasons are the obstacles that women face. These challenges include the patriarchal nature of the institution, women's exclusion from formal and informal networks, the difficulty of balancing the demands of work and family, the overload of work in the academic profession, women's low research profile, gender stereotypes, societal expectations, lack of empowerment and resources, and sexual harassment in Africa and South Asia. It is noteworthy to mention that all of the research studies were conclusive on the challenges faced except for the patriarchal culture where the institution's structure specifically the policies and procedures and the overload of work in the academic profession.

Supportive Situations that Aided Women's Ascension to Formal Leadership Positions

The external factors that positively influenced women's ascension to high-ranking positions are the facilitators or positive situations. While reviewing the available literature to identify the facilitators that contributed to women's advancement to formal leadership positions in higher education, it was evident that the number of research studies were less common than those that explored the challenges. In addition, Western research studies prominently outnumbered Middle Eastern studies. Four facilitators for women's ascension to high-ranking positions were recurrent in the literature. Three facilitators were most prevalent and include familial support, personal traits, and support from mentors, role models, and managers. As for the remaining facilitator, which is the home environment, was mentioned by three studies.

Familial Support. The most recurring factor that facilitated women's attainment of formal leadership positions in higher education was familial support. The women leaders stated in studies conducted by Al-Lamky (2006), Carter (2009), Cubillo and Brown (2003), Davis (2012), Hannum et al. (2015), Isaac et al. (2009), Karam et al. (2013), Morley (2014), and Nguyen (2012) that the emotional support and encouragement that they received from their parents, spouses, siblings, and extended family greatly assisted their advancement in their careers. For instance, one of the deans in Isaac et al.'s (2009) research study stated the following: "Daddy was very, always very, very encouraging and supportive" (p.140).

The studies revealed that women from different cultures and societies unanimously mentioned that the support they received from parents, spouses, and extended families assisted them in achieving leadership positions in higher education. The Omani women leaders stated that their parents instilled in them the necessary leadership values such as self-confidence (Al-Lamky, 2006). Female university presidents in the U.S. interviewed in Carter's (2009) PhD dissertation, stated that their families, which included parents, spouses, and extended family, helped them reach their leadership positions. The opinions of the Vietnamese female deans are analogous to those of American presidents. One of the deans stated that her husband supported her in advancing in her career (Nguyen, 2012). Accordingly, when women have familial support they are motivated and encouraged to pursue formal leadership positions.

Leadership Traits. Researchers found that women's personal traits such as determination, self-reliance, and self-confidence aided women's ascension to formal leadership positions in higher education (BlackChen, 2015; Carter, 2009; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Nakitende, 2012). Cubillo and Brown's (2003) study, which included women from different backgrounds and occupations aspiring to formal leadership positions, revealed that all women who attained high-ranking positions were self-confident and determined. Studies

have found that it is useful and effective for women to possess these traits because they work in challenging male-dominated cultures and environments (Cubillo & Brown, 2003, p. 286). Women who have the aforementioned personal traits perceive their ascension to formal leadership positions easier because they have the qualities needed to become leaders.

Support from Mentor/Role Model/Manager. Having a mentor, role model, manager, or sponsor facilitated women's advancement to formal leadership and academic positions in higher education. Although the definitions of a mentor, role, model, manager and sponsor differ, the findings in Afiouni and Karam (2014), BlackChen (2015), Davis (2012), Hannum et al. (2015), Pyke (2013), Nakitende (2012), and Tessens et al.'s (2011) studies and the UNESCO (2002) report reveal that all these individuals had a positive influence on the women, aiding them in advancing in their careers. Davis (2012) explains how women who had sponsors and mentors had the "ability to cultivate strong professional relationships [which] enabled these women to grow and to propel their ascendency to leadership opportunities" (p. 136). Participants who were from diverse nationalities (America, South & East Asia, Middle East, North Africa, Australasia, and Commonwealth countries) also supported the aforementioned finding by stating that one of the reasons that hindered their career ascension was not having a mentor (Morley, 2006b; Morley, 2014; Sandberg, 2014). However, Lebanese women in managerial positions stated that they did not consider having a mentor as a facilitator to their career advancement (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). The primary justification for their perception is that the concept of a mentor in Lebanese institutions is non-existent (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). Accordingly, if Lebanese women have never had the experience of being mentored, they will not perceive it as a facilitator nor as an obstacle to their career progression.

Egalitarian Home Environment. Lastly, researchers (Al-Lamky, 2006; Davis, 2012; Hannum et al., 2015) found that if the home environment where women leaders were raised

was egalitarian and supportive for female advancement, women's ascension to formal leadership positions was more likely to happen. The home environment includes the values and beliefs that are cherished and practiced by immediate family members.

As an example, although the Omani culture is patriarchal by nature, the Omani women leaders in Al-Lamky's (2006) study stated that their home environment was egalitarian, i.e. the siblings, irrespective of their gender, were treated equally. One of the participants stated that "both [her] parents and particularly [her] father believed in equality between the two sexes" (Al-Lamky, 2006, p. 58). This belief of equality between the siblings was cherished at home by the parents aided the daughters to pursue formal leadership positions.

The home environment also played a prominent role in the Western culture, positively contributing to women in attaining formal leadership positions. Results from Davis' (2012) PhD dissertation revealed that African American women leaders perceived that their home environment and personal experiences significantly influenced the decisions they made, their leadership style, and their ability to succeed. Thus, when the home environment cherishes education, equality between the siblings irrespective of their sex, and fosters determination and perseverance, women are raised to be well-equipped individuals for leadership positions.

Summary. The literature reviewed revealed and explained the nature of the facilitators that aided women to attain formal leadership positions. As is evident, the number of research studies that explored the facilitators is almost half of those that investigated the challenges that women face in attaining high-ranking positions. Accordingly, to add to the knowledge base, this research study will explore the Lebanese women's facilitators in their attainment to formal leadership positions in higher education.

Internal Factors that Influenced Women's Representation in Formal Leadership Positions in Higher Education Institutions

In women's journey to attain formal leadership positions, there are external and internal factors that impact their experiences. In both factors, there are positive situations. The positive external factors are termed as facilitators and the internal factors are the deliberate actions women take. These actions include advanced educational attainment, formal training, and intrinsic motivation. Accordingly, this section will review the internal factors that positively aided women's ascension to formal leadership positions.

Advanced Educational Attainment

The most prevalent factor that women purposefully pursued to attain formal leadership positions was obtaining advanced educational degrees. Researchers (Al-Lamky, 2006; Carter, 2009; Wang et al., 2013) found that women who advanced in their careers, stated completing a doctoral degree as a facilitating factor. For instance, the finding in Carter's (2009) research study revealed that one of the participants obtained two master's degrees and a doctorate degree in higher education, which qualified her to become a president in one of the universities in the Southern states in the U.S.

Education is also considered a critical facilitator for women's advancement to formal leadership positions in higher education in the Arab region. This was evident in Al-Lamky (2006) and Tlaiss and Kauser's (2011) studies, where the Omani and Lebanese women leaders stated the importance of education. By obtaining a doctoral degree, women proved that they are capable of aspiring and attaining goals that require tremendous amount of hard work, commitment and sacrifice. Since women demonstrated that they are able to attain such a challenging and demanding goal, they can aspire to and attain formal leadership positions.

Formal Training

Formal training is another endeavor that women undertook to advance their careers. The main aim of formal training is to purposefully transfer skills and knowledge from the mentor/lecturer to the protégé/participant (Enos et al., 2003). Formal training is conducted by either an academic or non-academic institution, such as a non-governmental organization, state, company, or a project funded by a grant. A degree or diploma awarded to the participant is one form of outcome of a formal training conducted by an academic institution. There are several activities, such as professional development and mentoring, that are considered to be formal training. Formal training is perceived to be an internal positive factor that aided woman to attain formal leadership positions because it is an activity that women willingly seek. Research studies conducted by Afiouni and Karam (2014), Airini et al. (2011), BlackChen (2015), Carter (2009), Davis (2012), Hannum et al. (2015), and Pyke (2013) revealed that mentoring and professional development, especially leadership development programs, aided in women in their ascension to formal leadership positions. Women leaders have sought formal training activities especially professional development because the outcomes, such as the ability to prioritize the matters needed to advance to leadership, learn different problem-solving strategies, ability to secure research grants, improve and learn new skills, and increase confidence, aided them to scale the career ladder (Airini et al., 2011; Hannum et al., 2015).

Leadership Development Programs. Leadership development aims to discuss the leadership style and methods leaders utilize to lead the organization to success (Hanson, 2013). Leadership development focuses on teaching "interactive, technical, and connective skills" that are needed to accomplish the organization's mission and vision and that are necessary to lead the organization's members (Kaplan & Kaiser, 2006 as cited in Hanson, 2013, p.109). Lastly, leadership development is teachable through formal and informal

methods and can be divided into different segments (Hanson, 2013). Day (2000) perceived leadership development differently. Leadership development involves building the cognitive and behavioral capacity of the organization's members to trespass the unforeseen challenges (Dixon, 1993 as cited in Day, 2000).

Leadership development programs are instances of leadership development because the main aim of these programs is for participants "to acquire new skills and to increase their knowledge about community issues where they can make a difference" (Rolle, 2013, p. 9). Leadership development programs cover a broad range of content (Hannum, Martineau, & Reinelt, 2007 as cited in Rolle, 2013), have multiple goals (Grove et al., 2005 as cited in Rolle, 2013) and methods to achieve these goals (Rolle, 2013). According to the UNESCO report (2002), the aim of a leadership program is to address women's underrepresentation in senior leadership positions in higher education institutions through changing policy, raising awareness of women's underrepresentation, identifying the obstacles that hinder women, attempting to find solutions to facilitate women's ascension to leadership positions, improving women's skills and competencies, highlighting the women's strengths and abilities, adjusting the university's policies and procedures, fostering support networks for women, "changing attitudes of men and women", and creating a friendly university climate (p. 15). For example, the President and Provost's Leadership Institute (PPLI), which is a leadership development program established in 2005 by the Women's Place and Office of Human Resources at Ohio State University aimed to create a pool of women who are eligible to become department chairs. The aim of PPLI is aligned with the purpose of leadership development programs explained in the UNESCO (2002) report (Hornsby et al., 2012).

Women's Benefits of Attending Leadership Development Programs. Although there is an increase interest in leadership development programs, there are limited research studies that explore the impact of leadership development programs on women's lives (Jennings,

2009). Recently, many studies (Baltodano et al., 2012; Bonebright et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2009; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Hornsby et al., 2012; Rolle, 2013; Tessens et al., 2011) and the UNESCO report (2002) revealed that leadership development programs positively impacted women's lives because these programs were facilitators for women's attainment of formal leadership positions. According to Baltodano et al. (2012), one strategy to increase women's representation in high-ranking positions in educational institutions is to have leadership development programs that aim to prepare women to face the challenges in leadership positions in higher education institutions. The research studies of Bonebright et al. (2012), Harris and Leberman (2012), Hornsby et al. (2012), Rolle (2013) and Tessens et al. (2011) revealed that leadership development programs facilitated women's ascension to formal leadership positions because they enabled women to build networks, increase their self-confidence, and have a clearer image of their academic career. These skills and knowledge are described below.

Building a Network. The majority of studies (Bonebright et al., 2012; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Hornsby et al., 2012; Rolle, 2013; Tessens et al., 2011) and the UNESCO report (2002) revealed that one of the most important benefits of attending a women's leadership development program, is the ability to build or belong to a formal or informal network at the institution. Harris and Leberman (2012) explained that having a network entails receiving support and establishing connections from fellow colleagues, role models, and presenters. These connections are important for the women because these women build networks with powerful and/or professional colleagues (Harris & Leberman, 2012). In addition, because of these relationships, women have the opportunity to receive positive recommendations for their promotions (Harris & Leberman, 2012). Finally, Hornsby et al. (2012) state that the advantages of women having a network allow women to develop

professionally, support each other, and to "reinforce aspects of leadership that contribute to culture change" (p. 109).

Increase in Self-Confidence. The second most reported advantage perceived by the participants who attended women's leadership development programs is their increase in self-confidence. This increase in self-confidence enabled women to apply for promotion, service the university by undertaking additional leadership roles, and express their opinion frankly and publicly during university meetings (Harris & Leberman, 2012). Moreover, women's increase in self-confidence resulted in job satisfaction and the ability to "develop their identities as leaders" (Harris & Leberman, 2012 and Bonebright et al., 2012, p. 39). The studies' findings revealed that participants who attended leadership development programs acquired additional skills and knowledge, such as the ability to effectively run meetings, become active team members, realize their impact and influence on the university, have a mentor and/or role model and be a mentor and/or role model, get motivated, and learn from the experiences of others (Hornsby et al., 2012; Baltodano et al., 2012; Tessens et al., 2011; Bonebright et al., 2012).

Clear Image of Academic Career. The research conducted by Harris and Leberman (2012) and Hornsby et al. (2012) and the UNESCO report (2002) revealed that women who attended leadership development programs were able to decide whether they would like to pursue a career in administration or remain as academicians. This self-awareness is important because if women are not interested in pursuing a leadership position, they will not have to endure the obstacles in holding administrative positions (Hornsby et al., 2012). On the other hand, if women aim to pursue a leadership position, through the leadership development program, they would be able to recognize their own abilities and strengths, which would reinforce their pursuance of leadership positions (Harris & Leberman, 2012).

Summary. Leadership development programs are instances of formal training and are considered effective in building leadership skills among candidates for leadership positions. Leadership development programs are defined as programs that aim to help the participants acquire new skills and knowledge to become proficient candidates for leadership positions. There are diverse leadership development programs that address different audiences. These programs include the President and Provost's Leadership Institute, which is for women only. According to the available literature, leadership development programs are beneficial because they help women build networks, have more self-confidence, develop a clearer image of their academic career, and acquire leadership skills such as running an effective meeting.

Personal Motivational Factors that Aided Women to Attain Formal Leadership Positions

In spite of women's underrepresentation and the challenges that they face, there are women who attain formal leadership positions in education and other sectors such as the government, banking, and social development institutions. Accordingly, this section will present four personal motivational factors that are found to aid women in achieving formal leadership positions in higher educational institutions and schools. The motivational factors identified are: a desire to make a difference (Afiouni & Karam, 2014; Cox & Salsberry, 2012; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Gerdes, 2010; Nakitende, 2012; Rabas, 2013), overcoming the challenges in the upper-level administrative positions (Limerick & Andersen, 1999; Nakitende, 2012), personal growth (Al-Lamky, 2006; Cox & Salsberry, 2012; Limerick & Andersen, 1999; Nakitende, 2012; Rabas, 2013), and personal internal motivators (Cox & Salsberry, 2012; Gerdes, 2010; Nakitende, 2012; Rabas, 2013). Other factors do exist. However, the four motivators mentioned are prevalent in the literature that was reviewed.

Desire to Make a Difference. The result of a few studies (Afiouni & Karam, 2014; Cox & Salsberry, 2012; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Gerdes, 2010; Nakitende, 2012; Rabas, 2013) indicate that the most recurrent motivator for women to pursue formal leadership positions is the desire to make a difference and to create a change in the educational institution they work in and/or in the lives of others. These women leaders want to be agents of change by aiding the enhancement and progress of the institution and by positively impacting the students, staff and faculty members. Rabas's (2013) finding revealed that the desire to make a difference causes the women to feel empowered and motivates them to pursue formal leadership positions. Also, the Cox and Salsberry (2012) study indicated that female university presidents helped their colleagues grow, succeed and advance in their careers. These women presidents were motivated by witnessing their colleagues' achievement in their academic careers. Moreover, the female leaders in Nakitende (2012) and Tomàs et al.'s (2010) studies revealed that these women were motivated to assist and to improve the students' learning. For example, one participant stated that she enjoyed watching students grow and develop throughout their years at university, to become well-rounded and highly educated individuals. Nakitende's (2012) findings explicitly stated that a source of motivation is to be a leader who is able to create an environment, which enables members to feel safe when taking chances and to foster their development and growth.

Overcoming the Challenges Faced in the Upper-Level Administrative Positions. Another motivational factor for women to pursue formal leadership positions is to overcome challenges while occupying upper-level administrative jobs. New experiences, thought-provoking situations and critical decisions are examples of challenges in formal leadership positions. Researchers (Limerick & Andersen, 1999; Nakitende, 2012) found that women who pursue upper-level administrative positions are motivated to overcome these challenges. Women want to use their skills and talents to trespass the obstacles in high-ranking positions

in educational institutions because they stated that they cannot stagnate in their current position as they need to move forward (Limerick & Andersen, 1999)

Personal Growth. Researchers (Al-Lamky, 2006; Cox & Salsberry, 2012; Limerick & Andersen, 1999; Nakitende, 2012; Rabas, 2013) found that the need for personal growth motivated women to pursue formal leadership positions. Herzberg's (1966) theory supports the assumption that "individuals are motivated to pursue and achieve leadership roles to satisfy their needs for personal growth and development" (Nakitende, 2012, p. 62). The studies revealed that women in formal leadership positions perceive personal growth differently. The women in Rabas's (2013) study believed that personal growth is the opportunity to grow or develop professionally, to pursue interesting positions to make a difference, to grow in their existing role, and to augment their portfolio or resume, which motivated them to pursue upper-level administrative positions. As for the findings in Cox and Salsberry's (2012) study, the women revealed that seeking personal growth is manifested when they acquire new skills, when they feel that they are more capable, skilled, and effective, when they develop professionally, and when there is an increase in their self-confidence (Cox & Salsberry, 2012). The women in Limerick and Andersen's (1999) study indicated that being career ambitious is perceived as personal growth because it motivated them to advance to formal leadership positions in schools and school support centers. On the other hand, Middle Eastern women perceive the outcome of personal growth as being outstanding and the best in their careers (Al-Lamky, 2006). Regardless of how women in formal leadership positions perceived personal growth, they all concurred that it is a main motivator for advancement in their careers.

Personal Internal Motivators. Lastly, the motivational factor that aided women to attain formal leadership positions is their personal internal motivation. Since this motivator is personal, each woman is found to be motivated differently to obtain upper-level

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administrative positions. Rabas (2013) defined internal motivation as the personal calling to the profession. Research revealed that self-confidence (Cox & Salsberry, 2012; Rabas, 2013), having a vision (Nakitende, 2012) and intrinsic traits (Gerdes, 2010) are instances of women's personal calling to formal leadership positions.

Having self-confidence was perceived to be an internal motivator for some women to ascend the career ladder, because they believe they can acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and ability to obtain a formal leadership position (Cox & Salsberry, 2012). As for having a vision, one of the findings in Nakitende's (2012) study revealed that having a vision motivated women to pursue formal leadership position in higher education. Because women had a vision, they clearly knew what their goal – to attain formal leadership position – which motivated them to strive and achieve it (Nakitende, 2012). Lastly, almost half of the women leaders in Gerdes' (2010) study stated intrinsic traits or characteristics as motivating factors in their careers. These motivating factors included the love of ideas, fear of failure and to do one's best. These factors are a few examples of internal motivators of the women who attained leadership positions in higher education in Gerdes's (2010) study.

Summary. Based on this review of the available literature, the desire to make a difference, the ability to overcome the challenges in the upper-level administrative positions, personal growth and personal internal motivators motivated to pursue formal leadership positions. The four motivators discussed are just a few factors that motivated women to attain leadership positions as there are other motivators, which include mentoring, empowering and networking.

The motivators mentioned are all intrinsic motivators because women pursue leadership positions not for external reward such as monetary but because they are internally motivated to become leaders. It is important to note that in the articles reviewed, there were

only two studies where a minimal percentage of women revealed that they were motivated extrinsically for external rewards to attain upper-level positions. Of those participants, 13.3% of the senior women leaders revealed that they were motivated by external rewards in Gerdes's (2010) research study. Accordingly, women have an internal drive to be leaders despite the significant obstacles that they have to overcome.

Theoretical Background

After reviewing an extensive body of literature about women in educational administration, this research study will adopt the feminist perspective for several reasons. Firstly, one of the aims of feminism is to include women's perspectives, which coincides with the purpose of this research study. This is because the study will seek women's perspectives as a means for exploring the nature of women's experiences in formal leadership positions in higher education institutions. Women's perspectives should be included in educational administration because, according to the literature, women are underrepresented in leadership positions, due to, for example, the masculine-based policies, procedures, values, beliefs and assumptions in the institution. Secondly, one of the aspects of the feminist theory includes having several explanations for a concept. Accordingly, one of the aims of this study is to identify challenges and positive situations that have impacted women's ascension to leadership positions. Through this exploration, the researcher will provide a detailed description of women's experiences in leadership positions in higher education institutions, and will unveil the rationale behind the women's actions throughout these experiences. Lastly, this research will adopt the interpretivist epistemological assumption, which is associated with the feminist perspective. This is because the researcher aims to understand the information gathered from the participants' perspectives and how they have created meaning of their reality.

Moreover, based on this review of the literature that explores the challenges, facilitators and deliberate actions that women undertook to attain formal leadership positions, of those studies, 87% of the research studies utilized a qualitative approach (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Afiouni & Karam, 2014; Airini et al., 2011; Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Al-Lamky, 2006; Armenti, 2004; Carter, 2009; Cox & Salsberry, 2012; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Davis, 2012; Diehl, 2014; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Gerdes, 2010; Hannum et al., 2015; Harris & Leberman, 2012; Isaac et al., 2009; Jamali et al., 2005; Karam et al., 2013; Limerick & Andersen, 1999; Nakitende, 2012; Nguyen, 2012; Pyke, 2013; Rabas, 2013; Rolle, 2013; Tessens et al., 2011; Tomàs et al., 2010). According to these studies, this research design was most commonly chosen because it provides a thick description of the phenomena to be explored. Rabas (2013) explained that she utilized the qualitative approach in her research study because it provided a safe and comfortable environment for the participants to share their stories.

Moreover, the qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand how participants give meaning to the social problem of attaining formal leadership positions in higher education (Rabas, 2013). The majority of researchers used in-depth interviews as instruments to collect their data. Only a handful of research studies employed survey instruments as tools (Airini et al., 2011; Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Gerdes, 2010; Rabas, 2013; Tessens et al. 2011). Nakitende (2012) utilized the method of triangulation, which includes interviews, observation and document analysis, whereas Cox and Salsberry (2012) used multi-case studies as an instrument to collect data for their research study.

This research study at hand will employ the qualitative approach because it provides a clear understanding and explore in-depth the details of women's journeys to formal leadership positions in higher education. In addition, this research study will utilize the qualitative approach because the majority of the research studies that explored the challenges,

facilitators, and/or deliberate actions that women undertook to attain formal leadership positions, employed the qualitative approach and the interview as a tool.

Summary

The review of the available literature revealed that there were challenges and facilitators, which are external factors, and formal training and motivation, which are internal factors that negatively or positively influenced women's ascension to formal leadership positions. The obstacles that were explored clearly explained the reasons for women's underrepresentation in high-ranking positions. As for the facilitators discussed in the external and internal factors, they were extracted from women's experiences as they directly inform the conditions that assisted women to obtain formal leadership positions. Moreover, it was evident from the available literature that some of the challenges need to be further explored to be able to overcome them and further research is needed to explore the facilitators for women's ascension to high-ranking positions in higher education institutions. Therefore, this research study will attempt to address these pertaining issues.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research study is to explore the journeys of women leaders who obtained senior formal leadership positions in a higher education institution in Lebanon. This chapter will describe and explain the research study's methodology which is divided into several sections. It will begin by stating the study's research questions which guided how the research study was conducted. Next, the perspectives that were adopted to explore and interpret the phenomenon under study are explained. Then, the procedures that were used to collect the data were described in addition to identifying the tools that were employed and the sources of data. The next section explained how the data was analyzed and the procedures used to ensure that the research study is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. Lastly, the research study's limitations were presented.

Research Questions

From the perspective of the women leaders:

1. What are the factors that hinder women from obtaining formal leadership positions in higher education?

2. What are the factors that facilitate women's ascension to leadership positions in higher education?

3. What are the deliberate actions/endeavors that women educational leaders undertake to obtain a formal leadership position?

4. In what ways does formal training affect women leaders in their attainment to formal leadership positions in higher education?

Research Design

Since the aim of the study was to explore the experiences of women leaders in reaching and holding high-ranking positions in a university, the study's design was devised to best capture the participants' perspectives by first using the interpretive paradigm to look at the phenomenon. The researcher also employed the grounded theory methodology as a guideline to conduct this study. Lastly, the research study's design was a qualitative instrumental case study.

Paradigms

There are three different paradigms (pragmatic/positivist, interpretive/constructivist, or post-positivist) that can be adopted to interpret a social reality which would influence the methodologies used in a research study (Cohen et al., 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Culbertson, 1978). The positivist paradigm looks at the social reality from a general, objective, and absolute perspective by identifying and defining the variables to be able to discover the type of relationship(s) between these variables (Cohen et al., 2007). The interpretive paradigm, on the other hand, uses the subjective and realistic lens to explore the subjective experience(s) of the individual(s) being studied (Cohen et al., 2007). As for the post-positivist paradigm, it emerged with an attempt to address the documented shortcomings of the positivist approach and was influenced by the constructivist paradigm methodologies. Similar to the positivist paradigm, the post-positivist approach believes in the existence of an external reality that can be studied through science (Trochim, 2000). However, the post-positivist paradigm perceives that observations that emerge from studying a phenomenon are based on the individuals' perspectives that are biased towards their cultural experiences (Trochim, 2000). This belief that observations are constructed by the individuals is aligned with the constructivist approach (Culbertson, 1978).

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Since the aim of this study was to explore women's experiences in formal leadership positions in a higher education institution, the interpretive/constructivist paradigm was the most suitable to be able to interpret this social reality (Cohen et al., 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Corbin and Strauss (2008) argue that any chosen methodology that explains an experience or situation will be complex because of the complexity of the world and because "there are no simple explanations for things" (p. 8). The interpretive paradigm incorporates this view that to be able to understand the phenomenon studied, the researcher has to also take into account the cultural, social and institutional contexts of the phenomenon being studied (Cohen et al., 2007). Consequently, through this lens, this study explored the complex interactions that took place as well as the influence of the society and culture on women's journeys to high-ranking positions.

The grounded theory methodology is one of the methods that can be used to collect and analyze data. Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967) defined grounded theory as "developing theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). The scholars (Glaser & Strauss; 1965, 1967) articulated that the grounded theory method has seven characteristics: 1) simultaneously collecting and analyzing the data, 2) constructing categories and codes only from the data yielded, 3) using the constant comparison analysis and 4) memo-writing, 5) constantly developing the theory from the data collected and analyzed, 6) using a sampling technique to help in the construction of theory, and 7) conducting literature review before and after the data analysis step (as cited in Charmaz, 2006). These seven aspects of the grounded theory methods provide researchers with systematic yet flexible guidelines to collect and analyze data (Charmaz, 2006). This research study adopted the grounded theory methodology because firstly it's guidelines are aligned with the study's interpretive philosophy. Secondly, the best procedures to conduct the study to achieve its aim was to use the grounded theory's

guidelines. Lastly, to be able to understand women leader's experiences in a university, the data were analyzed by generating theoretical categories that "have become sets of meanings which yield insight and understanding of people's behavior" which is how the data is analyzed using the grounded theory methodology (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 22).

Research Methodology

Having stated the lens that will be used to look at and interpret the phenomenon being studied as well as how the study will be conducted, the section below describes the research study's design. The aim of this study is to provide a detailed explanation and contextual description of the phenomenon, which is women's experiences in formal leadership positions in a higher education institution. To do so, a qualitative instrumental case study design was employed.

The qualitative approach was used because it guided in revealing how the women leaders differently perceived their journeys to reach and hold high-ranking positions. This is because a qualitative approach allows for the exploration of "different social realities that different individuals in a social institution construct as they participate in it" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010, p.15). The case study design was employed because Merriam (2014) recommended to use such a design in applied fields such as education because it clearly and holistically explains a problem, process, or program to improve practice. Also, this research opted to use a case study design because it provides the study with an in-depth insight, discovery, and interpretation of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2006). In addition, the case study design helps to uncover and identify significant interactions or relationships that were occurring within the studied case (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 2014). Finally, this design provided a holistic description and explanation (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2006) while optimizing the understanding of the studied case (Stake, 2005).

A case study is defined as an empirical inquiry where a researcher provides in-depth descriptions and analysis of an existing phenomenon that is studied within its real-life context (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2008 as cited in Merriam, 2014). A case study is particularistic, descriptive, exploratory, investigates a particular phenomenon, and clarifies the reader's understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2014). The phenomenon being studied could be a group, individual, institution, abstract theory, policy's actions, or functioning such as an effective principal (Merriam, 2014). There are three types of case study designs: intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple/collective (Stake, 2005). An intrinsic case study is when the researcher is interested in a particular case, whereas the aim of an instrumental case study is to provide an in depth holistic understanding of a certain phenomenon or to create a generalization from the phenomenon (Stake, 2005). Lastly, the multiple case study is a collection of instrumental cases (Stake, 2005). Therefore, the instrumental case study design was employed in this research.

Sources of Data

The section below will describe why and how the case-study university was selected. It will also describe the population, why and how the sample was obtained, and the participants of the research study.

Study Site

The chosen case-study university is one of the 32 private universities in Lebanon (Ministry of Education & Higher Education, 2013). This higher educational institution's philosophy, standards, and practices are based on the American liberal arts model which fosters freedom of thought and expression (Case-study University, n.d.). The chosen case-study's vision is to graduate students who are creative, critical thinkers, life-long learners, have personal integrity, civic responsibility, and leadership (Case-study University, n.d.). In

order to achieve its vision and mission, the ratio of faculty members to students in this higher educational institution is 1 to 11.2 (Case-study University, n.d.).

Also, this higher educational institution is a teaching-centered research university where the language of instruction is English except in the language courses (Case-study University, n.d.). This higher educational institution is medium in size according to the categorization of the universities' sizes as explained by the Carnegie Foundation (2010). The Carnegie Foundation stated that a university is small in size if the number of full-time students enrolled is between 1,000 and 2,999. A university is classified as a medium university, if the number of full-time students enrolled is between 3,000 and 9,000. Accordingly, the chosen case-study university's student body has a total of 8,856 students which is comprised of 47.9% males and 52.1% females enrolled during the academic year 2016-2017 (Facts and Figures 2017). This higher educational institution is coeducational since 1924 (Case-study University, 2017).

The university was purposefully selected as a site for this study for three reasons. Firstly, the university is ranked among the top higher education institutions internationally and as the first locally. In the academic year 2016-17, the Times Higher Education (THE) placed the case-study university in 501-600 bracket and stated that it is in the top 4% (Egyes, 2016). Also, the Quacquarelli Symonds World University (QS) which uses different ranking methods reported that the case-study university is among the top 250 universities globally (Safa, 2016). Locally, UniversityWeb Ranking and Webometrics ranked the case-study university as the first in Lebanon. Secondly, the researcher has access to the necessary sources and relevant data needed for the study. This was important when choosing the case-study university because, according to Stake (2005), the researcher should choose the most accessible case or one where the researcher can spend considerable time in.

Thirdly and most importantly, the university is currently undertaking initiatives to incorporate women's perspectives and increase their representation in the institution. The newly appointed president of the university initiated a taskforce that aims to explore the journeys of women faculty's career success and prominence at the university (Case-Study University's President, personal communication, December 2, 2015). The president hopes that the outcomes will become recommendations and action plans to improve the lives and careers of women faculty in the university (Case-Study University's President, personal communication, December 2, 2015). In addition to this task force, an internal advisory group has been created to assess the university's policies, procedures, and resources regarding discrimination, including gender inequality and harassment. The advisory group's recommendation will be used to help create a more inclusive, equitable and respectable climate at the university (Case-Study University's President, personal communication, January 22, 2016). Lastly, to encourage the community to support women's careers, a presidential award has been created to recognize the efforts of individuals who are supporting the careers of women in the institution, locally, and/or internationally (Abed, 2017).

Selection of Participants

The population in this research study consists of the women in senior formal leadership positions in a private Lebanese university. These high-ranking positions that are held by women comprise of the following: associate provost, dean, associate/assistant dean, director of a department/center/initiative/program/institute, associate/assistant director of a department/center/initiative/program/institute, and chairperson/director of an academic unit. The formal leadership positions are sorted into two categories: the academic and administrative. The academic leadership positions begin with the assistant/associate chairperson/director of a department, chairperson/director of a department, assistant/associate dean of a faculty, dean of a faculty, assistant/associate provost of the university, provost of

the university, and then the president of the university. The administrative leadership positions start by assistant/associate director of a department, director of a department that serves the whole university, assistant vice president and then vice president. The researcher has chosen these formal leadership positions, which are hierarchical, to explore whether the women followed this order to attain the leadership position or whether they were directly assigned to it.

As it is not feasible to access the whole population, a sample, which is a subset of the population, was chosen. The sample of this research is the women in formal leadership positions in a medium private university in Lebanon, which was chosen as the case study. Sixty-four women in this private medium university were in formal leadership positions during the academic year of 2015-2016 as per the information found on the university's website. Twenty out of sixty-four women were chosen to be interviewed based on the proportionate stratified random sampling. This sampling technique is based on dividing the population into groups/subpopulations, called strata, where the units in each group exclusively share common characteristics (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Seawright & Gerring, 2008; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In addition, the sampling of the groups, the number or percentage of the groups, in the sample should be equal/proportionate to their representation in the population (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Seawright & Gerring, 2008; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Lastly, units in the groups are randomly selected (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Seawright & Gerring, 2008; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In this study, the subgroups are five distinct formal leadership positions: group 1 are the chairpersons or directors of an academic unit or initiative, group 2 are associate provost, dean, associate dean, assistant dean, group 3 are the director/associate director of a center, institute, program, academic support unit group 4 are the associate/assistant director of a department, and group 5 are the associate vice president/director of a department. The occupants of group 1 report to the dean of the faculty,

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so these positions are considered as middle-level whereas group 2 and 3 report to the provost and are thus high-level positions. These leadership positions (group 1 to 3) fall under the academic category as per the university's hierarchy. On the other hand, the administrative positions are groups 4 and 5 and the occupants report to the vice president, chief financial officer, or the chief operating officer. Based on the above strata, if the number of women randomly chosen from a group was not a whole number, it was rounded up. Below is an illustration of the strata of formal leadership positions in the case study.

Figure 1

Hierarchy of Formal Leadership Positions in the Case Study University
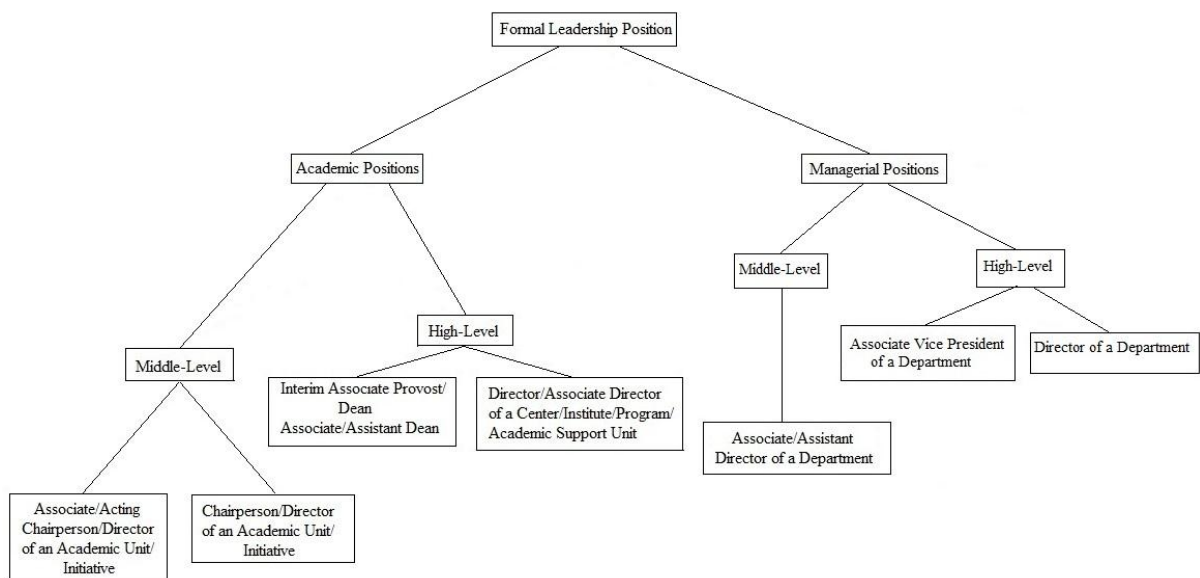
After stratifying the sample, the names of the women leaders were placed in an alphabetical order by their first names in a list. Based on the number of participants needed for each stratum, every third name was chosen to ask if she would like to participate in the study. Although generalization is not the main aim of this study, the previously outlined process was used to maximize the representativeness of the study participants.

To protect the privacy of the women leaders, the participants were identified by the level (middle or high) that they are categorized under. Thus, each participant had a code which comprised of two letters and a number. The first letter indicated if she was an academician (A) or administrator (M). The second letter referred to the rank of her leadership position, H for high and M for middle. The number indicated the count of the woman in the type and rank of the leadership position. For example, AH1 refers to the first academic woman holding a high-level position whereas MM2 is the second administrative participant in a middle-level position. From the demographic information that was obtained, the range of the number of years for academic women currently holding their high-level positions was from 0 to 10 years. Zero indicated that the woman was appointed in the current academic year 2016 – 17. The average number of years women academic held their high-ranking positions was 4.8 years. The academic women in these high-ranking positions had previous experiences in other high-ranking and middle positions as well as being an academician. The number of years in the previous position for women who were categorized as academicians was calculated by subtracting when they first began as assistant professors from the current date 2017. There was considerably a wide age range between the women academic holding high-ranking positions because the youngest was 43 while the oldest was 73 years; the average age for this group of women was 56. The majority of the academic women leaders holding high-ranking positions didn't receive any form of formal leadership training. Also, the majority of these women obtained PhD degrees as the highest educational degree.

The women academicians holding middle-level positions had a shorter duration in their current positions than those in high-level positions because the newest was currently appointed (0) and the oldest has been for 6 years in her position; the average duration was 2.42 years. The majority of these women were categorized as academicians in the previous positions that they held. The academic women holding middle-level positions were also

younger than those in high-ranking positions because the youngest was 36 and the oldest 64 where the average age was 45.42 years. However, both the majority of academicians in middle and high-level positions didn't receive any form of formal leadership training and they had obtained a PhD as the highest educational degree.

As for the women administrators holding high-level positions, they were in their current positions between 3 and 27 years where the average was 11.83. All of these women had previous middle-level administrative positions. The women administrators in these high-level positions had a similar age group as the academicians in middle-level positions because the youngest was 40 and the oldest 53 and the average age was 47.66 in the former group of women. The women administrators in middle-level positions didn't receive any form of formal training. All of these women in this group had a Master's Degree as their highest educational degree.

The women administrators holding middle-level positions respectively stayed for a longer time in their positions because the average was 7.5 years. These women held low managerial positions as previous positions which is assuming partial leadership duties yet at the bottom of the organizational chart. The women administrators holding middle-level positions belong to the same age group as the administrators in high-level and academicians in middle-level positions because the average age was 45.5 with the youngest 43 and oldest 48. Surprisingly, the women in this group received formal training. Also, one of the women is expected to obtain her PhD degree this academic year 2016 -17 while the other woman has a Master's degree. The table below (Table 1) shows the distribution of women leaders. Tables 2,3,4, and 5 summarize the demographics of the academic and administrative leaders in the study.

Table 1

Distribution of Women Leaders

	Middle-Level Positions	High-Level Positions	Total Number of Women Leaders
Academic Leaders	7	8	15
Administrative Leaders	2	3	5
Total Number of Women Leaders			20

Table 2

Demographics of the Academic Women Leaders in High-Level Positions

Participant	Number of Years in Current Position	Previous Position (X indicates the occupied position)			Number of Years in Previous Position	Received Formal Training (X indicates received training)		Highest Educational Degree (X indicates the degree obtained)			Age
		Academician	Middle-Level	High-Level		Yes	No	Master's	M.D.	Ph.D.	
AH1	2			X	3		X			X	54
AH2	3	X			5		X			X	53
AH3	0			X	1		X			X	51
AH4	10		X		13		X	X			60
AH5	5		X		4	X			X		58
AH6	6		X		1		X			X	54
AH7	10			X	1		X			X	73
AH8	2.5	X			20		X			X	45
Total	N/A	2	3	3	N/A	1	7	1	1	6	N/A
Average	4.8125	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	56

Table 3

Demographics of Academic Women Leaders in Middle-Level Positions

Participant	Number of Years in Current Position	Previous Position (X indicates the occupied position)			Number of Years in Previous Position	Received Formal Training (X indicates received training)		Highest Educational Degree (X indicates the degree obtained)			Age
		Academician	Middle-Level	High-Level		Yes	No	Master's	M.D.	Ph.D.	
AM1	1		X		4	X			X		39
AM2	4	X			23		X			X	53
AM3	3			X	5		X			X	64
AM4	6			X	1		X			X	42
AM5	0	X			10		X			X	36
AM6	3	X			11		X			X	44
AM7	0	X			9		X			X	40
Total	N/A	4	1	2	N/A	1	6	0	1	6	N/A
Average	2.42	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	45.42

Table 4

Demographics of Administrative Women Leaders in High-Level Positions

Participant	Number of Years in Current Position	Previous Position (X indicates the occupied position)			Number of Years in Previous Position	Received Formal Training (X indicates received training)		Highest Educational Degree (X indicates the degree obtained)			Age
		Lower-Level	Middle-Level	High-Level		Yes	No	Master's	MPhil	Ph.D.	
MH1	5.5		X		3		X		X		40
MH2	3		X		25	X		X			50
MH3	27		X		10		X	X			53
Total	N/A	0	3	0	N/A	1	2	2	1	0	N/A
Average	11.83	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.66	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	47.66

Table 5

Demographics of Administrative Women Leaders in Middle-Level Positions

Participant	Number of Years in Current Position	Previous Position (X indicates the occupied position)			Number of Years in Previous Position	Received Formal Training (X indicates received training)		Highest Educational Degree (X indicates the degree obtained)			Age
		Lower-Level	Middle-Level	High-Level		Yes	No	Master's	M.B.A.	Ph.D.	
MM1	11	X			10	X		X			43
MM2	4	X			6	X		X			48
Total	N/A	2	0	0	N/A	2	0	2	0	0	N/A
Average	7.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	45.5

Data Collection Instruments

To describe women's journeys to reach and hold leadership positions in a university, a basic socio-demographic form was used to collect personal information about the participants and then individual in-depth interviews were employed to explore women's experiences.

The researcher first collected basic socio-demographic data such as the participant's age, years of experience prior to attaining the leadership position, and the nature of her involvement in professional development activities throughout her journey to obtain the leadership position. Then, to be able to describe the women's journeys to reach and hold leadership positions, in-depth interviews were used to collect the data. The interview questions were semi-structured to ensure that the data collected from the participants answer the four research questions where their opinions, points of view, and understandings would be clearly stated (Mason, 2004) (see appendix B for list of questions). The interview was chosen as an instrument to collect data for three reasons. First, this tool can best capture the participant(s)' beliefs, opinions, and behavior (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). Secondly, the researcher can gather in-depth information about the participants' opinions especially when the responses made are non-verbal (Bell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007). Thirdly, the researcher can probe to obtain better responses and can verify the reliability of the responses (Bell, 2005; Keats, 2000).

The researcher had originally planned to conduct focus group interviews for member-checking. The focus group interview is a research tool, which consists of a group of people collectively discussing a particular topic (Liamputtong, 2011). The aim of the focus group is to "understand the participants' meanings and interpretations" of a chosen topic (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 3). Member-checking is a strategy used to allow the researcher to present the

participants with the analyzed data to ensure that there are no misconceptions (Merriam, 1998). Because the women leaders had very busy schedules, it was difficult to allocate a time to conduct the focus group interviews so the researcher resorted to conducting a second round of individual interviews with the women leaders for member-checking.

Data Collection Procedures

To ensure that the data collected will achieve the study's aim, the data collection procedures were guided by the grounded-theory methodology and are described as follows. The researcher began contacting the participants by sending them emails with the consent forms in English and Arabic as attachments. The researcher obtained the women leaders' email addresses from the university's website directory. The aim of the email was to ask twenty women in senior formal leadership positions in the private medium university about their willingness to participate in the study (check appendix A for the content of the email). If a woman declined to participate, another woman was chosen by the stratified random sampling procedure. After ensuring that the 20 participants were willing to volunteer in this research study, they were individually interviewed in two stages.

In the first stage, the participants were asked to sign the consent form, fill the basic demographic form (check appendix B for the demographic form), and were asked the questions listed in appendix C. As mentioned above, the researcher had to conduct a second round of individual interviews for member-checking because the women leaders had busy schedules and couldn't allocate time to conduct focus group interviews. Member-checking was used to ensure that the data obtained were valid by verifying it with each participant. Again, the researcher contacted the women leaders by sending them emails requesting to conduct a second individual

interview to member-check the analyzed data. Emails were sent to eighteen participants because the remaining two women leaders had extremely busy schedules. Twelve out of eighteen participants responded to the email and scheduled individual interviews. In this second stage of interviews, the women leaders were first presented with the generated themes that emerged and were asked to give their feedback and comment(s) on the themes. Throughout this process, the researcher ensured that there were no misconceptions regarding the analyzed data by asking them if they would like to amend or clarify any theme or subtheme. Then, the women leaders were asked if they had any general comments or feedback that they would like to add to clearly describe their experiences in leadership positions (check appendix D for the protocol and list of questions).

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher kept a journal documenting the process of data collection by taking notes of the participants who needed further probing, the necessary probing questions, and when was probing needed. In addition, the researcher's personal thoughts were recorded after each interview which allowed her to better analyze the data collected.

Data Analysis Procedures

As previously mentioned, the researcher followed the guidelines of the grounded theory to collect and analyze data. In addition, she followed specific strategies to ensure that the research study is valid and reliable. The section below describes how the data were analyzed and the methods used to have a valid and reliable research study.

Firstly, the individual interviews were transcribed by the researcher to be able to analyze the data. Fifteen of the twenty individual interviews were audio files since the participants gave

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consent to the researcher to audio-tape the interview. The remaining five individual interviews were handwritten notes because the women leaders preferred not to audio-tape the interview. Then, the researcher began coding which is defining the data through labelling each segment of it (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) explains that the coding process involves selecting, separating, and sorting the data to analyze it. Coding is a vital step in data analysis because it provides the framework by being the link between the data collected and the generated theory (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) also states that there are two steps in coding: the initial phase where the researcher studies the data segments which comprise of words, sentences, or lines and the focused phase where the researcher selects codes from the initial phase and tests them against the data collected (Charmaz, 2006). While coding, the labels written should categorize, summarize and adequately define the data segment (Charmaz, 2006). In this research study, firstly, line by line coding was used during the initial coding phase for each individual interview. Then, the codes were categorized into concepts that answered the research questions of the study. These concepts were a result of the focused coding phase.

Next, the researcher used the constant comparison analysis on the concepts which generated the themes. The aim of using the constant comparison analysis is to "generate a theory, or set of themes which are mutually exclusive (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p. 594). The themes that emerge result in a theoretical understanding of the phenomena, which is created from the data collected, i.e. a grounded theory (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). In this research study, the generated themes were further verified through member-checking before adopting them to describe women's journeys in reaching and holding leadership positions, the challenges and facilitators that they experienced, and the deliberate actions that they undertook to assist them in their journeys. Also, the coding process included recording the frequency of each emerging

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theme. The researcher opted for including all the concepts that emerged regardless of their frequency count. Since the purpose of the study is exploratory, the priority was to capture all the perspectives and nuances that were mentioned by the participants, hence reflecting a comprehensive account that aggregate all of the respondents' perspectives on their lived experiences. At the final stage, the researcher compared the generated themes with the literature review to see whether there were similarities and differences due to the different contexts.

Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher was memo-writing which is defined and described by Charmaz (2006) as writing analytical notes throughout the research process. The benefit of memo-writing is the ability to "catch your thoughts, capture the comparison and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). Charmaz (2006) explains that memo-writing is important because it fosters the transition from the collected data to a research draft. By memo-writing, the researcher was prompted to analyze her codes and data, discover whether there are gaps to fill in the categories, and consider the "codes as conceptual categories to analyze" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 91).

Quality Criteria

It is the researcher's duty to ensure that the study is reliable, valid, and objective. However, it is required to use the criteria pertaining to the research study's qualitative approach. While quantitative studies should demonstrate internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, qualitative research studies adopt the equivalent quality criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). Prominent scholars who employ the qualitative approach had different terms for the quality criteria. For example, Sharan Merriam (1998) explained that a qualitative research study has internal validity, external validity,

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and dependability whereas Lincoln and Guba (1985) labelled them as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher adopted the terminology of Lincoln and Guba (1985) for this research study.

Credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that a research study should be credible which is making sure that the findings are trustworthy and that the "constructors" of these findings – participants of the research study – approve the findings (p. 296). Similarly, Merriam (1998), explained internal validity as the extent to which the researcher is able to capture the reality of the phenomena studied (Merriam, 1998). Accordingly, Merriam (1998) suggests several strategies to increase the internal validity of the research study which are triangulation, member-checking, peer examination, long-term observation, having multiple analysis methods, and the researcher clearly stating his/her assumptions and theoretical perspectives. Triangulation is when the researcher asks several colleagues to aid in conducting the study, has more than one source of data, or has multiple data analysis methods to validate the research study's findings (Merriam, 1998). Member-checking allows the researcher to present the participants with the analyzed data to ensure that there are no misconceptions (Merriam, 1998). Peer examination is when colleagues discuss the findings and generated themes that emerge (Merriam, 1998). Due to the nature of this research study, triangulation, member-checking, and peer examination were used to increase the study's credibility. The researcher triangulated and member-checked by conducting two sets of individual interviews with the woman leaders in senior formal leadership positions. Also, the researcher discussed the coding and emerging themes at multiple occasions throughout the data analysis process with two other distinct researchers.

Transferability. Transferability, or external validity according to Merriam (1998), is the degree by which the research study's findings are generalizable to other situations. Because it is

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difficult to transfer the findings of a qualitative research study from one context to another, Merriam (1998) suggested that researchers use rich, thick descriptions, typicality or modal category and multisite designs in their research designs. Shenton (2004) also advises researchers to provide a detailed description of their study which includes the number of study sites and their locations, any exceptions for not including specific participants, the number of the participants, the methods used to collect the data, how many and the duration of the data collection sessions, and the timeframe for collecting the data. Although the researcher is aware that this study can't be generalized, she provided a thick description as stated by Merriam (1998) and Shenton (2004) in hope that interested readers will be able to make informed decisions in what can be transferred to their contexts.

Dependability. A reliable study is one where findings are consistent regardless of how many times it was replicated. A reliable study is also a study where meanings, results, and interpretations derived from the data collection and analysis phases by different researchers are similar (Franklin & Ballan, 2001). In a qualitative research study, it is difficult to yield the exact same findings because the reality that is observed or measured is perceived differently by participants (Merriam, 1998). So, a qualitative research study should be dependable whereby the results obtained should be consistent with the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Merriam (1998) suggested that the researcher clearly state his/her position or assumptions and theoretical orientations about the study, the chosen sample, the reasons for selecting the participants, and the research study's site to make the research study more dependable. Also, Merriam (1998) recommended triangulation and the use of an audit trail where the researcher records his/her thoughts during the data collection and analysis procedures. In this research study, triangulation was employed as well as the use of an audit trail.

Confirmability. Confirmability as defined by Shenton (2004) is making sure that the research study's findings are the participants' experiences and ideas and not the researcher's preset ideas and expectations. Shenton (2004) further explained four strategies to increase the research study's confirmability. The first method is to use triangulation. Secondly, the researcher should clearly state his/her predispositions, explain and support the selected approaches, and state the theories that previously existed (not the grounded theories). Thirdly, an audit trail should be used. Lastly, the methodologies used should be clearly and richly described. The researcher in this study attempted to increase the confirmability by triangulation, using an audit trail, and providing a thick and detailed description of the methodology section.

Limitations of the Study

While conducting this research study, three limitations arose which are the limited resources to conduct a comprehensive study, the number of women in the population was slightly varying, and resorting to purposeful sampling because the participants were unavailable. Firstly, this is a Master's thesis study which implies that there is an allocated timeframe to complete the research. Accordingly, due to the short amount of time, it was not feasible to include other higher education institutions nor interview more women to capture a broader spectrum of perspectives that is representative of the larger population of women in formal leadership positions at higher education institutions. Secondly, the duration for conducting this study was approximately two years. Throughout this timeframe, the chosen case-study university witnessed major improvement initiatives pertaining to improving the status of women faculty including their access to higher leadership positions due to the change in the institution's administration. This included the appointing or stepping down of occupants in formal leadership positions. Thus, women leaders who were appointed or stepped down throughout one academic

year were considered members of the population. As a result, some of the women interviewed

for the study either stopped occupying the positions they occupied when selected (i.e. former

chairperson) or occupied higher positions then the one they occupied upon selection to

participate.

Lastly, because the participants hold formal leadership positions and have very busy

schedules this resulted in them being unavailable. Therefore, purposeful sampling was utilized

for eight participants. The selected participants were chosen if they had a previous or are

currently holding a formal leadership position and the feasibility of allocating time for the

researcher to interview them played a major role in determining the final group of participants.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The aim of this research is to explore the journey of women who attained senior formal leadership positions in a higher education institution and to examine the personal endeavors these women undertook to obtain these positions at the university. More specifically, this study investigates the external factors and situations that have negatively and positively influenced women's attainment and retention of high-ranking positions.

This chapter presents the findings of the study and answers the research questions. These findings are discussed in three sections: the first describes the experiences of women in reaching and holding formal leadership position at a university. The second section presents the challenges these women have faced and the third lists the external factors that assisted women to reach high-ranking positions at a higher education institution.

Women's Journeys to Senior Formal Leadership Positions

The interview questions attempt to capture these women's experiences as leaders and to help them relate and reflect on these experiences. As such, participants were asked "how did you become this prominent faculty member on campus". Most of the women leaders began to describe their experiences by explaining how they were appointed. Then, throughout the interviews, the women shared the reasons they believe they were chosen to hold high-ranking positions. The data collected were subsequently coded into themes and subthemes. The frequency of each theme and subtheme was organized into a table. Table 6 presents a count of the women leaders' responses during their individual interviews. Accordingly, this section will

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present the respondents perspectives on the different ways they were appointed and the rationale

for being appointed to leadership positions.

Table 6

Frequency of Responses of Women Leaders

	Frequency of Responses of Women Leaders				Total Number of Respondents
	Academic		Administrative		
	Middle-Level N = 7	High-Level N = 8	Middle-Level N = 2	High-Level N = 3	
The Process of Being Appointed	**7**	**8**	**2**	**3**	**20**
Being Chosen or Nominated	6	7	0	2	15
Applying to the Position	1	1	2	1	5
Perceived Rationale for Being Appointed to the Position					
Having Distinguishing Leadership Characteristics and Abilities	7	8	2	3	20
Having Necessary Credentials	6	8	2	3	19
Having a Strong Academic Background	2	4	1	3	10
Having a Solid Research Profile	5	5	0	0	10
Constantly Developing Herself and Her Work	1	2	2	2	7
Working Hard	6	6	2	2	16
Taking on More Leadership Responsibilities	7	6	1	2	14
Previous Experience in Leadership	2	4	0	2	8
Establishing a Favorable Reputation through Rapport with Colleagues and Administration	4	1	1	0	6
Serendipity	1	0	0	1	2

The Process of Being Appointed

When the interviewed women leaders described how they were chosen to hold leadership positions, fifteen of twenty stated that they were nominated or elected, whereas the remaining five actively sought the position and applied for the job. The majority of those fifteen participants were academicians while the five participants were both academicians and administrators. This implies that the majority of women academicians didn't actively seek a leadership position; on the contrary, they were solicited to occupy these positions.

Being Chosen or Nominated. The women who were chosen or nominated were approached by senior administrators such as members of the Advisory Board, Deans, and the President and were asked if they were willing to hold leadership positions. All of these women accepted the nomination or appointment once they were asked. Despite this commonality, there wasn't a "one size fits all" process for appointing these women; each of them had her own unique experience when it came to how she was approached by the senior administration. As illustrated in the following narratives, one of the woman leaders was directly approached by her superior, the Dean, while the other woman was nominated by senior colleagues. For example, one of the academicians holding a high-level position (AH2) said: "So I was just on that [working as an academician] and you know the Dean asked me … whether I would be willing to serve as Associate Dean." Another respondent, AH5, a high-level academic leader, describes a different experience where the members of the Advisory Board nominated her to the Dean to become a member on the faculty's leadership team. The Dean supported this nomination and appointed her as an Associate Dean.

Among the twenty respondents, there were only three accounts where other females assisted in the selection of these women to their high-ranking positions in the university. The participants explained that senior administrators are predominantly males and as such, a recommendation for appointment from a senior administrator was more likely to come from a male rather than a female colleague. However, three respondents narrated that they received support from other females, indicating that when possible, there is solidarity among women leaders in the university as reflected in the experiences of AH1 and AH7. AH1, an academician holding a high-level position, explained how a senior female colleague assisted her in obtaining her current leadership position: "I was appointed because one of my female colleagues pointed me out." Another woman leader (AH7) explained that the female colleague, who was perceived as a mentor, did not directly assist her in assuming the position of Dean. However, the mentor encouraged the participant to pursue her PhD degree and to begin her career in academia.

Although they have been nominated, seven out of these fifteen women, two high-level academicians, four middle-level academicians and one high-level administrator, believed that they were approached by the senior administration because there weren't many qualified male faculty members who could hold these leadership positions. Of these seven women, two high-level and three middle-level academicians explained that they had been nominated because their eligible male colleagues had already served and could not do so again. One of the respondents, AM1, who holds a middle-level academic position, explained:

> … because there was really three of us and one had already been chair and was not being considered and then the other was too junior. So, I became the interim chair because I was an assistant professor at that time and then once I became an associate professor, I became a full chair.

Similarly, a high-level administrator, MH1, perceived that when she was appointed she was the only eligible candidate for the high-ranking position because she had the necessary expertise, skills, education, and experience. On the other hand, one academician (AM2) believes that she was selected by the senior administration because of the important personal characteristic of being a neutral person by being the only faculty member in the department who does not take sides when a controversy erupts. Respondent AM2 believed that her neutral stance earned her the nomination to hold a leadership position.

While the majority of the women related that they accepted the leadership position once offered, five of fifteen women leaders stated that when they were first approached by senior administration to hold a leadership position, they declined. These women initially declined these positions for various reasons. Two of these five women wanted to focus primarily on researching, teaching and serving the university. Another did not want to become the chairperson of the program she was teaching, but wanted to assume that same position in another department. One of the respondents declined because she did not want her colleagues to dislike her, and another preferred to pursue a Master's degree before beginning an administrative career. Of the two who first declined the nomination because they wanted to solely focus on research, teaching and serving the institution, one of them, who is an academician holding a middle-level position (AM2), explained that another reason she first declined the nomination was that she had a personal familial situation where she had to care of a sick family member. Respondent AM2 stated: "…but it [nomination] came at a bad time. This is why I wasn't really considering it because it happened that this was the time when my mother was diagnosed with a very bad cancer."

Applying to the Position. From the five participants who applied to the vacant

leadership position, three were administrators and two were academicians. Both academicians,

the administrator holding a high-level position, and the administrator holding a middle-level

position related that they went through the regular recruitment process of being shortlisted,

interviewed, and appointed. One of the respondents (AM4), holding a middle-level academic

position, explained that the Dean's Office advertised for the position and she applied to it: "So,

definitely I went through all the procedure, we applied, we gave presentations and many

interviews and I was selected for the position."

Moreover, while describing their experiences in applying to their respective positions,

two of the five women leaders pinpointed that the positions they applied to as competitive

because a large number of applications was received and the applicants to these positions were

from local and international backgrounds. An academician holding a middle-level position

(AM4) explained: "It was a very competitive position. As I remember they had like 60

applications. Yes. And it was open to not only Lebanon to all of the world and we had people

coming from all parts of the world, from Europe, from the States." Contrary to the experiences of

AM4 and MM1, the respondent AH4 did not believe that the position she applied to was

competitive because its job description was vague. Also, the few people who knew about the

requirements of this position knew that it entailed a significant amount of work.

Perceived Rationale for being Appointed to the Position

After describing how they were appointed to leadership positions, the women leaders

suggested the following reasons they perceive to have led to their nomination: having

distinguishing leadership characteristics, having the necessary credentials, working hard, taking

on more leadership responsibilities, having previous experience in leadership, establishing rapport with colleagues and the administration, and finally getting appointed as a mere accident.

Having Distinguishing Leadership Characteristics and Abilities. All of the respondents in the individual and member-checking interviews stated that to assume a leadership position, women should have distinguishing characteristics and abilities that are specifically attributed to a leader. The respondents explained that characteristics are different from abilities as characteristics are innate traits that are difficult to acquire but that can be developed, while abilities are skills that can be learned and improved. The twenty women leaders' responses amounted to 19 characteristics and 20 abilities that they believe a woman leader should have. The frequency of each trait and skill was organized in separate tables (Table 7 and Table 8). Only the most frequent characteristics and abilities are elaborated in what follows. The most recurrent characteristics are the woman leader's devotion to one's work, persistence, patience, self-confidence, fairness and honesty. As for the most frequent abilities a woman leader should possess are: the ability to make rational and informed decisions, the ability to communicate properly, the capacity to deal with people, the competency to build and work in teams, the ability for self-promotion, the capability to manage one's time effectively, the ability to seek help and advice, and the capacity to know the university and country's culture.

Table 7

Characteristics of a Woman Leader as Perceived by the Participants

	Characteristics of a Woman Leader as Perceived by the Participants				
	Academic		Administrative		Total Number of Respondents N = 20
	Middle-Level N = 7	High-Level N = 8	Middle-Level N = 2	High-Level N = 3	
Devotion to Work	6	8	1	2	17
Persistence	2	3	1	0	6
Self-Confidence	0	2	1	1	4
Patience	1	1	1	0	3
Fairness	1	2	0	0	3
Honest	1	2	0	0	3
Diplomatic	1	0	0	1	2
Listener	1	1	0	0	2
Assertive	0	1	0	1	2
Sociable	0	2	0	0	2
Has Emotional	1	0	0	1	2
Looks at the Situation from Different	0	2	0	0	2
Active	0	0	0	1	1
Ethical	0	1	0	0	1
Determined	1	0	0	0	1
Courageous	1	0	0	0	1
Wise	0	1	0	0	1
Visionary	0	1	0	0	1
Mature	1	0	0	0	1

Table 8

Abilities of a Woman Leader as Perceived by the Participants

	Abilities of a Woman Leader as Perceived by the Participants				
	Academic		Administrative		
	Middle-Level N = 7	High-Level N = 8	Middle-Level N = 2	High-Level N = 3	Total Number of Respondents N = 20
Builds and Works in a Team	3	2	1	1	7
Promotes Herself	3	2	0	2	7
Makes Rational & Informed Decisions	2	1	1	1	5
Seeks Help & Advice	2	3	0	0	5
Has Communication Skills	1	2	0	1	4
Manages Time Effectively	2	1	0	1	4
Knows How to Deal with People	2	0	0	1	3
Knows the University & Country's Culture	2	1	0	0	3
Enjoys Work Challenges	2	0	0	0	2
Productive	1	1	0	0	2
Motivates Team Members	0	0	1	1	2
Solves Problems	2	0	0	0	2
Has Managerial Skills	1	1	0	0	2
Supports Staff Members	0	1	0	0	1
Thinks Strategically	1	0	0	0	1
Acts Professionally	0	0	0	1	1
Trusts the Institution	0	1	0	0	1
Fast Learner	0	1	0	0	1
Self-Learner	1	0	0	0	1
Efficiently Utilizes Available Resources	0	1	0	0	1

Of the twenty respondents, seventeen stated that the most important leadership characteristic is devotion to work. For example, AH3, an academic leader in a high-level position, described her devotion by saying: "I get invested and people see that." The participants described the different reasons for their dedication to their work. They mentioned that their dedication came from being passionate about their work, from loving their department, faculty, and university, from enjoying tasks with interesting content, believing in their work outcomes, and from making a difference in people's lives through their work. In fact, five out of ten women leaders stated that they loved, cared, and were deeply committed to their faculty and/or department. For instance, a middle-level academician (AM6), described her feelings toward the institution by saying: "I'm deeply committed [to the institution], this is my life." Women leaders noted that it is because they have such an affection towards the university, faculty, and department, that they eagerly and voluntarily work to serve it which made them visible to the senior administration.

Of twenty respondents, five academicians holding middle and high-level positions and one administrator in a middle-level position believed that persistence is another leadership characteristic that a woman leader should have. Being persistent helped the woman to overcome the obstacles that she has faced to advance in her career. For instance, respondent AH5 narrated her experience of how being persistent helped her succeed: "… you just have to persist through any rejections or failures. You just have to go accept them and move on."

Two administrators and two academicians holding high-level positions out of twenty participants deem that women leaders should be self-confident. It is important to possess this characteristic because women are working in a male dominated environment and need to constantly prove themselves. Respondent AH4, a high-level academician, stated that being self-

confident assisted her in holding her current leadership positions: "I cannot see why I should fail in such a thing [her current leadership position] …I can just learn, I can pick up the skills…"

By being patient, two academicians holding a middle and high-level position and one administrator out of twenty participants believed that they were able to reach and sustain their current leadership positions. The respondents explained that patience was needed when obstacles were hindering their work and in dealing with colleagues. Respondent MM2, a middle-level administrator, explained that she had to be patient to advance in her work especially as the senior administration was unsupportive: "Just being patient and keep at it, I keep suggesting the same thing over and over again."

Also, three of twenty respondents perceived that to be a leader, one has to treat others fairly. For example, an academician in a high-level position (AH2) described her perception of being fair: "I'm a quite balanced person, I listen to both sides of the story." Respondent AH2 explained that because she has this characteristic, she was nominated to her current senior leadership position. It seems that this characteristic is valued because a fair leader implies that she is unbiased and able to make informed and rational decisions which are integral to sustain her high-ranking position.

According to three of fifteen academicians in middle and high-level positions, they were nominated to their leadership positions because of their honesty. Respondent AM7, an academician in a middle-level position, explained that she is honest because: "I'm a very straightforward person and I say it out front." This is an important trait because it facilitated collaboration with colleagues since it enabled her to directly and clearly articulate her thoughts and intentions.

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In addition to having leadership characteristics, respondents seem to agree that a woman leader should also have distinguishing abilities. The most recurrent skill that seven of twenty participants believed a leader should have is the ability to build and work with a team. According to them, it is important to possess this ability because the woman leader is working with other members and needs to know how to foster collaboration and team work between them to be able to achieve the desired work outcomes. Respondent AH3, an academician in a high-level position stated that this skill was an appealing characteristic to the senior administration: "… I can bring people together, they [senior administration] can see that which is important." Moreover, an academician in a middle-level position, AM2, described how she was able to foster teamwork between faculty members, staff, and graduate students. Respondent AM2 explained that she "…calmed down [the faculty members by having] …a lot of coffee breaks, we had them socialize again." As for staff members, she was able to have them work as a team because she "never gave them orders", showed them how to cover for each other's work and mistakes, and received appraisal and acknowledgement from the senior administration as a team effort. In addition, respondent AM2 was also able to make graduate students feel like they were part of a team by renovating the graduate students' room and inviting them to departmental occasions.

According to seven out of twenty participants, for a woman to become a leader, she has to promote herself. This is because by promoting herself, the woman would be more visible to the senior administrators who would consider her as a potential candidate for a leadership position. Of these respondents, four advised other females to promote themselves and had the following to say: "… sell yourself in terms of not doing it in a cheesy or aggressive or vulgar way but in a this-is-my-accomplishment kind of way…" (AM1), "…propel yourself maybe in a particular way and show evidence that you are really good at this." (AH3), and "… show your

skills to prove that you deserve the position" (MH1). Although these four respondents advised women to promote themselves to assume leadership positions, Respondents AH1, AH3, and AM3, who are three academicians in middle and high-level positions, mentioned that they did not lobby or promote themselves nor solicit leadership positions, yet they were still able to assume high-ranking positions.

Of twenty respondents, three academicians and two administrators in middle and high-level positions mentioned that they believed that a leader should have the ability to make fair, rational, and informed decisions. According to them, one of the leader's duties is to make decisions; so, they need to be fair, rational and informed because of their large scope and detrimental consequences. Respondent MM1, a middle-level administrator, considered that it is very important for a leader to carefully think about and analyze the consequences of a decision before making it: "…think about the decisions … before making them…the decision-making process…it is very important…"

Of eight academicians in high-level positions, two explained that because they were not afraid or shy to ask for help from different people to learn, they succeeded in their leadership positions. Respondent AH7, an academician holding a high-level position, described her experience by stating:

> … if you are not afraid of asking for help, you know you can define your problem, and ask for help… if I have a problem it is not a shame and I can seek out either with the Executive Officer or the Provost or fellow Dean…when I didn't know … how things are handled, this way I would go to help and he would tell me how he did it and … I learn.

Additionally, three out of fifteen academicians in middle and high-level positions believed that to succeed as a leader, a woman should seek advice from people they trust. By doing so, she would be exposed to different ideas and ways of thinking that might benefit her. An academician in a middle-level position (AM3) explained her belief by stating the following:

> … you have to have your eyes, your ears open, and your mind mainly. You know your mind open to receive advice…In my opinion, it is always beneficial to listen to listen. Now you take what you think is good and you discard what you think is not good, you have to have your own judgement but listen…

According to three academicians in middle and high-level positions and one administrator in a high-level position out of twenty respondents, a woman leader has to have effective communication skills to be able to properly deal with people. Respondent AH4, a high-level academician, stressed that a leader should have "excellent communication skills." Moreover, the other academician holding a high-level position, AH6, stated that it is important to have good communication skills to be able to properly and clearly convey your message to anyone whether an academician or non-academician.

From their personal experience, out of twenty participants, three academicians in middle and high-level positions and one administrator in a high-level position stated that because they managed their time properly they were able to succeed in their leadership positions. These participants explained that they would divide their time according to their duties and try as much as possible not to waste time. It is important for women leaders to know how to manage their time to be effective in both their work and personal lives. For example, Respondent AM2 described how she managed her time: "…it was a matter of organization because I used to finish

[work], like to come and really work in a condensed way for 2 or 3 hours just to solve the issues of the department, and during these 2 or 3 hours, I wouldn't take a coffee break…"

Additionally, two academicians and one administrator considered being able to effectively deal with a diverse group of people as an important ability a woman leader needs to possess. According to them, this is because the leader is exposed to different people who have unique personalities and different working styles. So, as a leader, she should know how to deal with these different types of people. These respondents believed that an effective leader should listen to the others' opinions, know how to deal with faculty members who are aggressive, problematic, have a different style of working, and know when to be lenient or fair. One of these participants, Respondent AM3, believed that an effective leader must listen to others' opinions and not take the issues discussed personally. She stated that a woman leader should be able to: "…discuss without starting to insult people if they are not of her opinion…you are not the discussion here…we are discussing issues…we are not discussing you."

Lastly, three out of fifteen academicians believed that the woman leader should clearly understand the environment and context she lives and works within, which is both the university's and country's culture. They stated that it is very important for a leader to understand the values, norms, and beliefs of the people she is working with to minimize conflicts and to create a healthy working environment for all. Respondents AM2 and AM5, academicians holding middle-level positions, explained that an academic leader should know how the university functions in terms of policies and procedures, types of committees, and the processes involved. Additionally, Respondent AM5 stated that the academic leader should be aware of the students' values, beliefs and opinions, especially when teaching. Finally, one high-level

academic leader, AH4, stated that an effective leader should be well-informed and aware of the country's culture to avoid misunderstandings.

Having Necessary Credentials. The participants explained that to be able to assume and retain a leadership position, the women academician or administrator should have strong credentials. Namely, they should possess some of the leadership characteristics in addition to a strong academic background, a solid research profile, and the ability to constantly develop herself and her work. Both women administrators and academicians stated that having a high-level educational degree from a prominent university is an important credential to assume a leadership position. Because the academician's credentials are typically measured by their promotion to senior professorial ranks, the respondents noted that it is important for aspiring women leaders to have a solid research profile. Women academicians in this study perceived the latter to be a significant criterion. On the other hand, the administrators pointed at a different set of requirements as indicative of advanced credential that included their ability to constantly develop herself and her work.

Having a Strong Academic Background. Ten of twenty women leaders, six academicians and four administrators in middle and high-level positions, perceived that having a strong academic background, particularly the highest educational degree in specific fields from reputable and prominent universities as a key factor to attain high-ranking positions. For example, one of the respondents, AH3, an academician in a high-level position, explained: "I want to say a PhD at Harvard, you have to mention this. I got there, I mean you have to go to Harvard to get there. You can't go to whatever to Iowa State and I think it is linked to that." Also, AH8, an academician holding a high-level position, explained that while pursuing her

higher educational degree she was exposed to prominent role models who demonstrated and taught her the work ethics needed in an academic institution.

   Having a Solid Research Profile. The majority of academicians, ten out of fifteen, narrated the importance of excelling in research as it is one of the important factors that enabled them to obtain a leadership position. Additionally, respondents advised junior academicians to focus on their research and to build a solid research profile by choosing a specialized field of study to advance in their academic careers. Doing so will enable these women to continue advancing in the academic track, especially that obtaining a leadership position is temporary and that the academician will eventually have to return to researching, teaching, and serving the university. For example, Respondent AH3, an academician in a high-level position, explained the importance of excelling in research to be able to hold a leadership position: "You know I wouldn't have gotten this job if I haven't been good frankly as a researcher." Moreover, a high-level academic leader, AH2, explained the importance of building a research profile before holding a leadership position:

> One of the things that is very important are particularly for women is that they need to secure their academic credentials before going into administration because it is very hard to secure your academic credentials…I mean mainly research but not only so, teaching and research. It is hard to secure those if you take too much administration on…

   In addition, AH2 described the importance of excelling in research despite holding a high-ranking position: "… I would say not to give up on the teaching and research because you know, for any of us, my role as [leadership position] is temporary…So, you don't want to not have your teaching and research to go back to."

Constantly Developing Herself and Work. Four of five administrators and three out of fifteen academicians in middle and high-level positions believe that for them to be in high-ranking positions it is important to constantly work to improve themselves and their work. These seven women leaders explained that they always try to develop themselves by reading books and trying to be up-to-date in the academic and technical aspects of their work. An administrator holding a middle level position (MM2) described her pleasure in continuously developing herself: "I'm the type of person who always likes to learn more. I like to find out how to become a better person." Additionally, Respondent AH6, a high-level academic leader, explained that by self-learning, mainly through reading, she was able to overcome technical challenges in her work: "…it was a self-learning, self-effort… I learned a lot of my skills but on my own…"

Moreover, two of these four women administrators in a high and middle-level position applied to their current positions because they felt that in their previous positions they had reached a stage where they could not get any further career advancement or could not experience professional growth in their current positions. According to the high-level administrator (MH2), one of the reasons she applied to her current position is because she always seeks to learn and has the desire to improve herself. She said: "I like to know more things all the time" and "I like to improve and advance." Respondent MM1, the middle-level administrator, applied to her current position which included more decision-making and high-level actions such as planning, coordinating, and leading a team.

Additionally, two of these four administrators explained that not only do they try to develop themselves but they also try to constantly improve their work by finding innovative methods to enhance it. An administrator holding a high-level position (MH3) explained that her department is constantly chosen by the university administration to be part of a pilot study, and

attributed that fact to her continuous attempts at finding new methods to improve work processes, including automation. Middle-level administrator (MM2) attempted to find innovative ways to improve her work; she explained: "…I started to start introducing new things to the area [content and work processes]" and "because I think I gave it a new approach, like I breathed new life into it."

Working Hard. Women leaders who participated in the study identified working hard as one of the most important factors that led to their appointment and their retention in senior leadership positions. Additionally, all of the twelve respondents who participated in the member-checking interviews stressed on the importance of working hard. According to twelve of fifteen academicians and four administrators out of five in middle and high-level positions, working hard allowed them to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of their roles and to be perceived as successful in the university. Respondent AH6, a high-level academic leader, stated the need to work hard: "…taking on a leadership role takes a lot and I'm not exaggerating…"

Working hard means taking on more responsibilities, putting in extra hours and being devoted to the university by demonstrating that they are always ready to go over and beyond the call of duty. For example, one of the academician respondents (AH5) explained that her success in the center she was hired to direct, paved the way to her being appointed to a senior leadership position. Respondent AH5 said that after she was hired to start a center, it was her hard work that led to the expansion of the center and its varied services and to encompass 15,000 patients.

Moreover, an academician and administrator in middle-level positions and a high-level administrator perceived their appointment to leadership positions as way for the institution to reward them for working hard and for taking on additional tasks. For example, the middle-level

academician (AM1) related that she put in a lot of hard work. The two administrators, MH1 and

MM2, said that because they took on more tasks, duties, responsibilities and offered specialized

services, they were rewarded through the creation of their current leadership positions.

Respondent MM2, an administrator in a middle-level position explained that by working hard

and performing additional tasks, the administration ended up creating a position that

encompassed the extra tasks she performed: "So I was taking on more if you want "heik" more

responsibilities. I kind of created this [current leadership position], if you want."

Additionally, of twenty respondents, three academicians in middle and high-level

positions and one administrator in a high-level position, mentioned that they advised junior

faculty members who would like to become prominent academicians and/or obtain senior

leadership positions to work hard. According to respondents AM3, AH5, and MH3, the only way

to succeed as a woman in reaching leadership positions is to work hard. Respondent AM3, a

middle-level academician, advised junior faculty members to work hard: "… if we have to use a

motto you say work, work, and work. If you work you get there…" Respondent MH3, the

administrator in a high-level position, added that in order to succeed, one should "never say no to

additional responsibility", and always accept the additional duties bestowed upon her.

Taking on More Leadership Responsibilities. According to respondents, being exposed

to the duties and responsibilities of a leader through serving the institution has allowed them to

attain higher leadership positions. This factor was also strongly agreed upon by the twelve

women leaders who participated in the member-checking interviews. Of twenty participants, four

academicians stated the exact phrase of "never saying no to service" to demonstrate that they

were willing to serve without any hesitation and despite the extra work load that additional

service entails. The women leaders explained that they serve the institution by being a member

on committees, taking on more tasks, duties and responsibilities, managing more units, becoming the chairpersons of departments, and serving the students. When faculty members perform such tasks, they are exposed to the role of a leader as it offers them the opportunity to make decisions that will influence their colleagues and/or students.

Approximately half of the academicians in both high and middle-level positions attributed their selection for leadership positions to the fact that they had served the university by being members on more than one committee. AH2, an academician holding a high-level position, adequately described what she considered a typical scenario of a female academician's experience:

> One of the things that often happen in academia generally and happens at [the institution] as well is that women are not very good at saying no. So, they get into a lot of administrative work or committee work. That was already the case before I took on this position. So, I don't know, I had a record number of committees, I can't remember how many, I'm not counting them anymore, maybe twenty or something. … I'm on the IRB, I chair a scholarship committee, on the senate steering committee, I'm now on the tenure design committee.

The women leaders explained that when they were members on committees they broadened their vision which guided their actions when they assumed high-ranking positions. Respondent AM6, an academician in a middle-level position, explained: "…to do work in committees because … Yeah I think it is good to start you know from the bottom up and not to kind of to be dropped from above."

Additionally, participants indicated that by serving on committees, academicians would be able to interact with their fellow colleagues and build relationships with one another, which will provide a useful pre-amble for assuming leadership position. For example, a middle-level academic leader, AM7, stated that she was able to obtain her current position through the "…service and personal relationships that I made through being on committees." In addition, committee work can enable these women to learn and gain experience in how to deal with other faculty members. An academician in a high-level position, AH7, explained the added value of serving on committees: "…to work on committees… this is how you learn… how to argue your case, how to reach a decision in a group…"

Furthermore, the participants mentioned that they have advised junior faculty members to serve on committees because the academicians would be able to learn more about the institution, become more visible on campus, and know how to deal with and build relationships with fellow colleagues. For example, a middle-level academician (AM6) explained that, through committee work, a faculty member can gain knowledge about the institution's policies and procedures: "… to work in committees because this is also a way to learn to get to know your university… I learned a lot from him [chair of the committee] and from the committee and, ok, you can read the catalogue to know the rules but that is kind of abstract…" Also, by serving on committees, women academicians are more visible and can thus be nominated for leadership positions because they would be able to implicitly show their capabilities through their work on committees. A high-level academic leader (AH2) further explained that generally women become visible to the administration because of their loyalty and citizenship to the institution:

I think in many cases men get chosen for leadership positions because they are very visible or charismatic and that is not a very good description of me. I'm not a very visible

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or charismatic person. So, I think in my case I was chosen because I'm sort of a good citizen, reliable, I'm not too self-interested. I'm hard working so I get my research done and the administration; see what I mean. But I think men are often chosen for leadership positions not necessarily because they are good citizens but because they are more visible.

Moreover, respondents stated that an academician is exposed to the duties and responsibilities of a leader when she accepts to be the chairperson of a department. By taking on this additional responsibility, the faculty member assumes an important leadership position because she is responsible for ensuring that the department runs smoothly both academically, with regard to the courses offered and the students' academic issues, and administratively, such as new faculty member recruitment and the promotion of colleagues.

Also, respondents indicated that providing additional services to students exposed them to the roles and duties of leaders and enhanced their chances of being chosen for additional leadership positions. A middle-level academician, AM4, explained that her job description to serve underprivileged students entailed leadership responsibilities. Respondent AM4 conveyed that because she performed well, she was nominated and appointed to another leadership position. Respondent AM4 described her journey: "…because most of the … scholarship students they come from Lebanese public schools, they are underserved students… so they felt that I'm really close to these students and I'm really able to take care of them, I know their needs already, etc. etc." Additionally, a middle-level academic leader, AM7, explained that one of the advantages of serving students, specifically through her position of academic adviser, is gaining more knowledge about the university and receiving important feedback on different aspects from students.

Previous Experience in Leadership. Of the twenty respondents, eight women stated that having previous leadership experience helped them attain higher leadership positions. More particularly, four academicians and two administrators all in high-level positions had previous leadership positions such as being the chair of a task force committee, director of a center, chairperson of a department, associate director, and the director of a research institution. According to these women leaders, their previous experience exposed them to the duties and obligations of being both a leader and administrator. In addition, these experiences equipped them with the necessary skills and knowledge to assume senior leadership positions they were offered at the later stages in their careers. One of the academicians (AH3), holding a high-level position, stated that her experiences in these previous positions "were invaluable" to her current senior leadership position. She elaborated that by having more opportunities to assume leadership positions, she had more and better hands-on experience on how to act as a leader. Another respondent, AH1, an academician holding a high-level position, also explained that "you need to have the [previous] experience because you can't be a leader the first day you start working at the institution."

Moreover, two academicians and two administrators in middle-level positions explained that although they did not have previous leadership experience, they had working experience in the same university which gave them an insider stance, something they perceived as a leadership advantage. For example, a middle-level academician, AM5, stated that due to a departmental consensus she was nominated to temporarily hold an academic leadership position. Because she excelled in that task, she was selected for a permanent leadership position. On the other hand, the two administrators explicitly stated that they considered themselves "insiders" because they knew how the university functions from their previous work experiences. The two respondents

explained that because they were already staff members working in the institution, they had the opportunity to be exposed to different departments, and to learn the institution's rules, regulations, mission and vision, and its culture.

Establishing a Favorable Reputation through Rapport with Colleagues and Administration. Of twenty participants, six respondents narrated that by having a favorable reputation on campus they were able to assume leadership positions. The respondents explained that a woman's reputation is built by establishing relationships with colleagues and senior administrators through for example being a member on a committee because it allows for interactions between different people which will show her style in dealing with people. Respondent AM3, an academician in a middle-level position, explained how a faculty member portrays herself through committee work: "… people, you know, they end up knowing you from the meetings, from being in contact with them on several occasions." So, if a woman academician demonstrated that she knows how to adequately deal with different people, that would enable her to establish relationships with them that would led to building a favorable reputation. Respondent AM5 a middle-level academic leader explained that through being on committees: "… you just sort of establish a rapport with your colleagues, with the administration in which they can kind of realize they can rely on you for certain things." Also, being a member of a committee allows the woman to present the quality of her hard work. Respondent AM3 stressed on the fact that building a favorable reputation is not only through establishing rapport, it is also on working hard. She stated: "…there is no other option you work, you are a good person everybody will know it…I wanted to be a good scholar…and I worked hard for it and I worked very hard and I got it…" Therefore, by demonstrating that the woman knows how to deal with different people and that she works hard, she would have a favorable reputation which will

make her more visible and more likely to be recommended to serve the institution and hold a leadership position. Respondent AM4, a middle-level academic leader, explicitly stated that a woman's "reputation plays a very big role" in being chosen to a leadership position.

However, one of the respondents did not agree on the importance of establishing relationships with others. AM7, a middle-level academician, explained that at the contrary, she was asked to hold a leadership position because she didn't have any personal connections with the senior administration.

Serendipity. Although four out of twenty participants explicitly stated that assuming a leadership position was not a career goal, two women explicitly stated that they are in their current leadership positions by accident. The middle-level academician (AM1) described her journey by stating that she entered academia because her husband relocated to another country and she followed him. According to Respondent AM1, becoming an academician was the only option for her to continue working in her field.

Another administrator holding a high-level position (MH3) also explained that it was by accident she ended up in her current position and that she had never thought of pursuing such a career path; "I reached here by accident, mere accident." The administrator explained that after she finished her studies, she received a phone call from her academic mentor asking her if she would like to assume a leadership position. Thus, both women did not plan to pursue such positions but their personal situations and coincidence altered their paths to where they are today.

Challenges that Impeded Women in Attaining Formal Leadership Positions at University

Throughout the women's journeys in attaining senior formal leadership positions, they have faced external factors that impeded their ascension and retention of their positions. A few

women leaders preferred to describe these situations as challenges whereas others preferred to call them obstacles. Regardless of the terminology used, the participants faced the following external factors that they considered challenges in their journey to attain leadership positions: balancing competing demands, working in difficult conditions, not receiving formal leadership training, getting stereotyped for being a female, being considered an outsider, having few women role models in leadership positions, experiencing limited communication skill, managing the budget, and not facing any challenges. Table 9 shows the frequencies of each challenge stated by the women leaders.

Table 9

Challenges Women Leaders Face

| | Challenges Women Leaders Face | | | | |
| | Academic | | Administrative | | |
	Middle-Level N = 7	High-Level N = 8	Middle-Level N = 2	High-Level N = 3	Total Number of Respondents
Balancing Competing Demands	6	6	2	2	16
Difficult Working Conditions	6	5	2	2	15
Challenging Work Environment	3	2	1	2	8
Having Uncooperative Colleagues	3	2	1	1	7
Challenging her Authority	3	2	0	1	6
Undervaluing her Contribution to the University	1	0	1	1	3
Experiencing Limitations in Institution's Rules and Regulations	4	2	0	0	6
Having Limited Resources	2	1	1	0	4
Facing Unsupportive University Administration	2	0	1	1	4
Lack of Formal Leadership Training	2	4	1	0	7
Getting Stereotyped for being a Female	3	2	0	1	6
Being Considered an Outsider	2	3	0	1	6
Few Women Role Models in Leadership Positions	2	3	0	0	5
Experiencing Limited Communication Skill	0	2	0	1	3
Managing the Budget	0	2	0	1	3
Not Facing Any Challenges	0	1	0	0	1

Balancing Competing Demands

The most prominent challenge fifteen out of twenty women leaders faced in their personal experiences was the difficultly to manage the large amount of work in addition to maintaining an equilibrium between the academic and administrative duties, as well as between personal and work responsibilities. To be able to balance the different responsibilities is a significant challenge because each responsibility is highly demanding and women leaders are expected to fulfill each responsibility simultaneously and equally.

This large amount of work was manifested differently for each academic middle-level leader. For example, respondent AM1 had to chair several challenging committees and task forces that would benefit her department: "I was chairing multiple of that were contentious and difficult committees and taskforces so that is also a challenge and that takes a lot of time to be able to prepare for something that, you know, is going to be very controversial." She then described the consequences of having a heavy workload by saying: "… there is lack of someone just taking a look and seeing how much load there is on a person before throwing more on them certainly that can impact; if not your progress, your mental health." Respondent AM4 had incompetent staff members and had to do the work herself. In addition, Respondent AM6 was the chairperson of a big department and stated the following: "…this department is bigger than some faculties, so it is a heavy burden, right, in the larger responsibility." Despite having heavy workloads, Respondents AM1, AM4, and AM6 academicians holding middle-level positions stated that they succeeded in their leadership positions.

In addition to having a heavy workload, women leaders had to balance their academic and administrative responsibilities. For instance, three academicians in high and middle-level

positions, had to manage their time and effort to conduct their research and partial teaching, while performing their administrative duties. The participants had to excel in both areas because firstly if they do not work on their research they will not be able to advance academically. Juggling both tasks is indispensable for their advancement, because as soon as these women leave their leadership roles they go back to their academic track. Secondly, if the respondents do not perform well and deliver outcomes in their administrative work, the senior administration would replace them. Respondent AH2 stated: "So I think one of the things that I had to juggle with is trying to keep my research and teaching going while trying to do a good job on the rest of it."

Also, three academicians, AM2, AH2 and AH7 advised junior faculty members to first focus on advancing in their academic careers and to be promoted to associate and full professors, especially that it would be quite difficult to balance between their academic and administrative duties. Respondent AH2, a high-level academic leader, stated her point of view:

> One of the things that is very important, and particularly for women, is that they need to secure their academic credentials before they go into administration because it is very hard to secure your academic credentials … I mean mainly research. but not only so, teaching and research. It is hard to secure those if you take too much administration on. So, I actually think it is not really advisable particularly for women to take on administration before they are gone up the ranks… because professor … it is not like you can stop doing research but there is less pressure on you.

Contrary to the experiences of the three academicians, AM2, a middle-level academic leader, reported in the member-checking interview that she did not perceive balancing her

academic and administrative duties a challenge. She stated that she continued to have the regular workload of an academician, while assuming a leadership positions. Furthermore, Respondent AM2 stated that she was able to continue working on her research and teaching. However, the respondent did note that the number of publications published was negatively affected because of the occasional additional administrative duties that she took on.

Moreover, the participants reported that they also had to balance their work and personal lives which they perceived to be a significant challenge. This situation is seen as challenging because females have duties and responsibilities at home and at work and both of these fronts have high expectations they cannot abandon. AM3, a middle-level academic leader, explained in the member-checking interview that because women are in a paternalistic society, they have more responsibilities and duties towards their family and home unlike their male counterparts, which creates this difficulty in balancing the demands in their work and personal lives. Eight out of twenty women leaders referred to their family life, which constitutes their immediate family i.e. the members are the mother (woman leader), father, children, and often siblings. For example, Respondent AH5, an academician holding a high-level position, described her experience and the difficulty in balancing her work and personal lives, especially because she has children:

> You have um pregnancies and complications of pregnancies and all of these things that can happen while you are building your career. For example, I had to stay in bed for weeks like 6 or 7 weeks during pregnancy, so that is a big hurdle that you have to overcome…when I was in bed for weeks I would do my lab meeting on the phone.

In addition, during the member-checking interview, Respondent AM1 described a difficulty she faced in trying to balance the demands between her families and work, especially when serving the institution. She explained that most of the scheduled times for attending a committee or task force meeting is during "off-hours which is after 5:00 pm or in the weekend." Respondent AM1 stated that this was unfair as she is often incapable of attending to her familial responsibilities, especially if her partner also has a career with similar duties.

Of twenty women leaders, three explicitly stated that it was difficult to balance the duties and responsibilities between their work and family due to the constraint of time. Respondent AM7, a middle-level academic leader, stated: "prior to having kids, I had time", which allowed her to focus on her academic career. Another academician holding a high-level position (AH2) explained during the member-checking interview that because she tries to balance her personal and career life and due to the constraint of time she always wonders whether she has the time "to put the meal on the table…"

Additionally, two academicians AM3 and AH5 explained that for a female faculty member to succeed in her academic and leadership career, she has to clearly know which path she would like to pursue and whether she wants to advance in her career or raise children. Respondent AH5 further explained that if the academician would like to advance in her career and raise children, it will require that she sacrifices certain things:

> I think one of the most important thing is actually to know what you really want…So, they say they want a career but then they when it comes to building a career they hold back and, oh no, I'm just going to stay with the kids, and you know that it is important for me which is quite ok…you have to have your goals and it may require sacrifices.

Moreover, Respondents AM3 and AM2 advised female faculty members differently on how to balance their personal and career lives. Participant AM3 recommends women academicians not to ask for special requests from the university on a personal familial front because firstly it will negatively influence how the senior administrators perceive female faculty members which may eventually cause the university to no longer hire female academicians who are at an age of creating families: "You know you can't always seek excuses and you know special treatment…they [university will] avoid to take females faculty members…" On the other hand, Respondent AM2's advice which she stated during the member-checking interview was pertaining to when female faculty members should assume administrative duties. She advised women faculty members who have children who are younger than 7 years old not to assume leadership positions because female academicians would take away from the time when their children need them the most. AM2 explained that when children are 7 years or older, they would be somewhat more independent, which would allow their mother to spend more time on her career if need be.

However, in the member-checking interview, a middle-level administrator (MM1) strongly disagreed that balancing the demands of her personal and career lives is a challenge. Participant MM1 explained that this obstacle is a misconception perceived by society and that women are actually better than men in handling more responsibilities and duties and are able to perform well under pressure. Furthermore, she stated that she was able to assume a leadership position, advance and succeed in her career, raise two teenage children, soon complete a PhD degree, and fulfill all of the household duties without having a house-help.

Difficult Work Conditions

Another obstacle that the majority (15 out of 20) of the participants faced is working in difficult conditions. This obstacle encompasses several challenges that mostly pertain to the higher education institution. As such, women leaders reported working in a challenging environment, having uncooperative colleagues, experiencing limitations in the institution's rules and regulations, having limited resources, and facing unsupportive university administration as difficult work conditions.

Challenging Work Environment. Eight out of twenty women leaders stated that working in a challenging work environment is an obstacle that they have faced. According to these participants, having an external factor such as the Lebanese Civil War, an unfriendly work atmosphere, and competitiveness among colleagues resulted in a challenging work environment.

A middle-level academician and two administrators explained that the civil war in Lebanon influenced their working conditions and the attainment of leadership positions. Respondent AM3, the middle-level academic leader, explained that it was difficult to work during the war because it was unsafe since the roads were not always open and bombs were thrown sporadically. The administrator holding a high-level position (MH3) explained that she was supposed to assume a senior leadership position but due to strong political interventions caused by the war, she was appointed into a lower position. She described her situation by saying:

> I was supposed to be the director of the department, but at that time, it was like in like
> 1989, I started the work, so there was war in Lebanon and it wasn't easy to you have

many political and influences interfering with the decisions of the university like any other institution in the country.

However, MH2, a high-level administrator leader, explained that she perceived the war as helping her reach her current position. This is because the war forced the men to join the fighting factions, so the workforce was accepting more women. After being able to enter the workforce, Respondent MH2 worked hard and demonstrated her capabilities which enabled her to advance and succeed in her career.

Of twenty women leaders, three perceived the work atmosphere as an obstacle for different reasons such as being challenging to new members and having a climate dominated by competition. According to MM1, an administrator in a middle-level position, assuming a leadership position implies working in a "totally new environment" that requires time to be accustomed to it. MM1 explained that it took her time to understand the "general ambience" of the office, the office dynamics and how people treat each other, and the time periods when the office is busy. The high-level academic leader (AH5) narrated that being in a leadership position in academia is competitive because the academicians compete to obtain research grants that are needed resources to advance. She explains: "… some people actually they fight you, there is competition, there is all kinds of things."

Another facet in working in a challenging work environment is the lack of teamwork and the competitive tension between faculty members. AH7, MH2, and MM1, an academician in a high-level position, administrator in a high-level position and administrator in a middle-level position respectively, explained that team members in the department were uncooperative and unwilling to work together, which was an obstacle that they had to overcome. The respondents

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believed the reason for this obstacle was because the team members had an individualistic approach to work. Respondent AH7 describes this by saying: "… it was a difficult period of trying to bring people together because they also were used to a very individual perspective." Only a high-level administrator leader (MH3) stated that, at the beginning, her senior team members were unsupportive of her and she had to win their trust to be able to effectively work together by saying: "… they were not supportive and every time I ask a question they tell me we are not opening a school here for you. You have to learn by yourself."

Additionally, two out of twenty participants reported that faculty members within the same department and in different faculties did not treat each other well, which resulted in their work being incomplete, not having the most competent academician to perform a task, and wasting time on unimportant tasks. Participant AM5, a middle-level academic leader elaborated on this obstacle by saying that her work was impeded because "… there were administrative offices that we had to deal with and they would have 2 groups that don't talk to each other." In addition, when faculty members are not on good terms with each other, the most eligible faculty to serve on a committee or assume an additional work responsibility is not selected. AM5 explained this scenario by stating the following: "… for someone who would be the perfect person to be on this committee or that committee, but due to things having nothing to do with their competency they aren't or they are sidelined." The middle-level academician, AM7, narrated that because of the politics occurring in her department, it caused stress and wasted her time "doing unproductive work instead of focusing on research, service, and teaching."

Having Uncooperative Colleagues. The challenge of having uncooperative colleagues was reported by six out of twenty women leaders. The participants stated this obstacle explaining that many of their male colleagues devalued their achievement of advancing to leadership position, and undermined their authority on the premise that achieving an administrative position ranks below in importance and value to their solid research record. Since the participants had to work with such uncooperative colleagues, tensions arose between them which accentuated the difficult working conditions of women leaders after assuming their leadership position.

Challenging her Authority. Three academicians holding middle-level positions, an administrator and two academicians holding high-level positions out of twenty participants, stated that they had to deal with colleagues who questioned their authority, disrespected their professional judgment, critiqued their work, leadership style, and disregarded their directives. Of these respondents, two middle-level academicians and the administrator in a high-level position stated the same phrase which is that their colleagues did not take them seriously.

For example, MH3, a high-level administrator leader, narrated how her colleagues doubted her work: "…They didn't perceive that a female can lead a department, you can negotiate with companies, and so at first no one took me seriously." A middle-level academician, AM6, also explained that she was not taken seriously because she was the only professorial female holding the lowest rank; so, during departmental meetings or events, her opinion and voice were not heard. She stated: "You were not taken I would say you were not taken as serious as some male colleagues …"

A middle-level academician (AM2) explained that her colleagues did not accept her holding a leadership position by saying: "…The biggest problem was the faculty and how they

did not accept me…" In addition, she related that her colleagues tried to put her down by telling her that her job is to stay at home with her kids and that she is not doing a good job in this leadership position because her way of working is calm, peaceful, and friendly. According to these faculty members, a good leader is one who is aggressive and fights to obtain what they want.

Another instance of how colleagues challenged the woman leader's (AM4) authority is by completely ignoring her directives via phone calls or emails. She stated: "… they won't sometimes take you seriously, if you are going to approach sometimes professors or deans they don't take you seriously." In order to accomplish the task at hand, the woman leader had to ask the academician holding a higher position to directly contact the colleagues to either perform the task or answer the woman leader's requests.

However, during the member-checking interview, AH4, a high-level academic leader, stated that colleagues challenge the authority of any leader irrespective of gender. AH4 explained that it depends on the leader's style, personality, and way he/she presents him/herself which causes the colleagues to respect his/her authority.

Undervaluing her Contribution to the University. Of the twenty women leaders, two who are in middle-level positions stated that their colleagues did not believe in the value of the services of the programs they led. This became an obstacle to them. MM2, a middle-level administrative leader, described this obstacle: "… people were not believing in what I do." However, both the academician and administrator explained that they did not get recognition until they succeeded in proving to the people in the institution, especially in the senior administration the importance of their work through showing them results and evidence of the

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quality of their contribution as leaders. As such, after a lot of hard work the administration has

begun to acknowledge that their work is significant and now support the women as leaders.

Respondent AM4 explained:

> People at … [the university] didn't believe that students coming from public schools can
>
> make it at … [the university]. And this was this was the biggest challenge. And I was told
>
> … [this is what they thought because] after two three years … [when] the fruits and
>
> success of the program [was evident], they came back to me … [and told me] we thought
>
> this but … [no] we were wrong…

The administrator holding a high-level position (MH3) faced a similar challenge where

the senior administration did not perceive that the department she led as an important unit on

campus. Respondent MH3 stated that the department "was not looked at as something very

critical." She explained that she faced many obstacles that she had to deal with on her own until

this situation changed with the new administration and the department was seen as important and

an "added value to the strategy of the administration."

Experiencing Limitations in Institution's Rules and Regulations. Respondent AM2,

AM3 and AM7, all academic leaders in middle-level positions, narrated that throughout their

academic career they faced hindrances because of the lack of clarity in the institution's rules and

regulations. Participant AM7 perceived this obstacle from a different perspective, which is the

university's bureaucracy is inefficient Specifically, AM2 and AM3 stated that, as an example,

the promotion guidelines for female faculty members were unfair and unclear.

Respondent AM7 believed that the university's bureaucracy is inefficient and believed

that most of the staff members in these units are inefficient and hinder the academic leader's

work. In addition, AM6 and AH2 in the member-checking interviews strongly agreed with this finding. These women academicians reported the bureaucratic nature of the institution as a challenge because in order to perform an administrative task, it should be forwarded to several units on campus.

Respondent AM3 explained her experience from being promoted from assistant to associate professor, while AM2 explained in detail her experience and the challenges she faced in being promoted from associate to full professor. Both of these respondents explained that the promotion's rules and regulations were unfair towards them. From AM3's experience, "… the rules for promotion were not clear…" and the senior administrators then were making "arbitrary" decisions regarding the promotion of faculty members.

As for AM2, she stated that she is still bitter about her promotion experience because the university's administration was not fair in the promotion's rules and regulations regarding female faculty members. Respondent AM2 further explained that because she first had a miscarriage and then gave birth to a premature child, she was allowed to take an unpaid leave of absence and was told that she would have an additional year to be able to apply for promotion. After a year from this agreement, AM2 was pregnant again and the university changed the rules regarding maternity leaves to allowing the woman faculty member to take a paid leave of absence for one semester but without an extension to the year she has to apply for promotion. Due to this change, AM2 asked the Dean the status of her situation and he informed her that he had to break the previous agreement of allowing her an additional year to apply for a promotion. Because of this incident, AM2 felt that she was not treated fairly by the senior administration and the promotion rules and regulations worked against her favor. However, during the member-checking interviews, two academicians in middle and high-level positions disagreed with their fellow

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female colleagues that the promotion's rules and regulations are unfair and unclear. AH1, a high-level academic leader, explained "the promotion guidelines are very good, transparent and fair."

Having Limited Resources. According to three academic leaders and one administrative leader out of twenty participants, having limited resources in regards money, infrastructure, and people, is an obstacle that they faced. In addition, eleven out of the twelve participants in the member-checking interviews strongly agreed with this finding. Respondents AH8 and MM2, an academician in a high-level position and an administrator in a middle-level position respectively, narrated that because there are limited research funding and budgets, it was difficult for them to perform their work. Participant MM2 stated that she overcame this obstacle by improvising for example baking cakes at home and bringing them to the workshop session instead of catering from outside.

Of these four respondents, three stated that the infrastructure, or having limited space, as another challenge that they faced. Respondent AH8, an academician holding a high-level position, explained that there was a chronic problem when it comes to the allocation of research space for science researchers. Similarly is the case for classrooms and office space. AM4 explained that the program she is leading is succeeding by having a yearly increase in the number of students and coordinators, yet, they do not have enough classrooms or offices to accommodate them.

Having limited human resources was another challenge mentioned by two academicians each in a high and middle-level position. Respondent AH8, the academician holding a high-level position, explained that in the department they did not have PhD students who can assist the faculty members in their research. Thus, the academicians had to do all the work themselves. The

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academician in a middle-level position (AM4) voiced a similar concern by saying that she had to inherit

> … certain staff who were not able to cope with the demands of the … programs… and what happens is that because you can't recruit new people, because you can't work on these people, they can't learn anything new, what happens is that you have to do their work yourself.

Facing Unsupportive University Administration. Of twenty respondents, four stated that one of the factors that challenged their attainment and work in their leadership positions is the lack of support from the university's administration in terms of not believing in their work and not assisting them in resolving departmental conflicts. Of these four women leaders, three respondents related that the senior administration did not believe in their work and thus did not support them. For example, AM4, the academic holding a middle-level position narrated:

> … the old administration they were not supportive…And I remember I will never forget it, I went to the highest administration and telling them please you have to talk to the …[office] because … [the donors of the scholarship fund] are not happy at all about the visibility the level of visibility of the program. And they shouted at me and told me… we can't help you because this office is understaffed.

Only one respondent, AM7, who is an academician in a middle-level position, explained that there were quarrels and differences in the department; yet, "the previous administration didn't help, which included the dean's level."

Lack of Formal Leadership Training

Seven out of twenty women leaders labeled not having any form of formal leadership training as an obstacle in their work. Formal training is obtained through different methods such as having a mentor, attending a leadership development program, seminar, workshop, conference or obtaining an educational degree. The respondents perceived not having formal leadership training a challenge because they were not trained on how to perform the new duties in their leadership positions. Also, respondents AM1 and AH2 stated that they did not have mentors to guide them.

Of the seven respondents, three academicians and one administrator explained that they had to learn on their own how to perform the technical aspect of their work, such as conducting orientation sessions, presenting work to donors and non-academicians, and working on the banner system because they did not receive any training when they assumed their position. For example, AH6, a high-level academic leader, stated:

> I'm saying a challenge; it is a challenge because like I said in the beginning I was not trained to do this: how to do presentations, how to talk to donors, how to talk to municipalities, how to talk to people on the ground, to NGOs. I mean it is a different language, it is a different approach, different conversation or whatever.

Respondent AH7 similarly explained that she was not trained on how to perform the technical aspects in her leadership position: "It is not a hindrance it is just when you come to be a Dean, nobody gives you training."

Getting Stereotyped for Being a Female

Almost half of the women leaders (eleven out of twenty) narrated the existence of gender stereotype when females apply to work, are in the workforce, and hold leadership positions. One of the participants, AM1, explained that the interview committee believed that it had the right to ask females during recruitment and advancement procedures details about their personal lives and commitments, whether they were married or whether they had children… This is a form of gender stereotype because male applicants are not asked these questions when sitting for a job interview.

Another gender stereotype working women face is being portrayed as favoring the focus on their families as their first priority at the expense of their career. Two academicians, one holding a high-level and the other a middle-level position reported this gender stereotype. Respondent AH5, a high-level academic leader, explained: "one of my seniors in the researchers' team at … [university] came and told me that you know you are a woman you are going to have kids and so don't worry about writing grants and stuff, just be a service person for us." Furthermore, the middle-level academician, AM6, supported this statement by saying that the majority of male colleagues perceive a woman's work in academia just a job and not a career: "I think women are still kind of treated as you know this something that you are doing is an addition. It is not your career or life."

Five out of twenty participants highlighted the presence of certain stereotypes about what a woman leader can or cannot do and perceived the presence of these stereotypes as a big challenge. A high-level administrative leader, MH1, elaborated that if women are supposed to work, then, they are only fit to assume secretarial or low-ranking positions, where all they need

to do is to rely on their outer appearance and behave in a feminine manner. She explained, that as a result, if a woman is to assume a leadership position, it would be perceived that she got to this position because she was acting nice and flirtatious. Respondent AM2 further stated during the member-checking interview that some of the male colleagues and senior administrators perceive leading as exclusively as a male role which a woman cannot assume.

Being Considered an Outsider

According to 20% of the women leaders interviewed, another challenge that impeded their work while occupying their leadership positions is not belonging to the leadership team, a team dominated by men. Women leaders were treated and seen as outsider to that team. Due to being an outsider, women faced obstacles in accessing necessary information and were overly criticized by their male colleagues. Participant AM1 narrated that because she is a female, she is considered an outsider and not allowed into the "old boys' club", something that she pointed out as impeding her work. This respondent stated the importance of belonging to an informal group and having a network of connections because in her experience she was not informed about decisions that have been made during informal meetings that took place in the faculty lounge or coffee shop by her male colleagues. Respondent AM1 explained that she had to use other methods, such as conducting individual meetings with her colleagues to be able to have access to the necessary information. However, AM1 clearly stated that she "doesn't want to penetrate this club" which implies that her aim of association is to have access to necessary information. As a result of her experience, AM1 would advise junior female leaders to build relationships through informal channels:

I think there is a tendency of women to also go into a meeting and as soon as it is done

get out, whereas the men linger and talk amongst each other … it is not necessarily

socializing in outside of work, it is even within work … just linger a little bit after

meetings, talk about things, connect to people who could be advocates to things you want

to do…

Of twenty women leaders, three women academicians and one administrator in middle

and high-level positions reported that they felt vulnerable working in a "male dominated society"

because they were being overly-criticized. Respondent AH1, an academician holding a high-

level position, stated that "when you assume a leadership positions, the society begins to dissect

your personality, psychology, and leadership style." Moreover, a high-level academic leader

(AH3) narrated that it was uncomfortable being appointed to a previous leadership position

amongst a majority of senior male colleagues. Additionally, an academician holding a middle-

level position (AM3) described how she was picked on for having a different high-school

education and belonging to a religious sect: "… they had always this attitude … she is French

educated … [as if] being a French educated is handicap and which is not a handicap by the

way… this is … the general attitude I would say of people…" In addition, during the Lebanese

Civil War, AM3 held a leadership position but because she was a Maronite, her colleagues

assumed that she is affiliated to a political party and made harsh comments about her.

However, it is worth noting that of the twenty respondents, one academician and one

administrator holding high-level positions (AH8 & MH3) stated that it was not a challenge to

work in a "male dominating environment". Respondent AH8 reported that she was treated very

well. As for MH3, she explained during the member-checking interview that she believed the

university is no longer completely a "male dominating environment". Yet, Participant MH3

believed that the institution should continue to improve to achieve a better equality between men and women especially in leadership positions.

Few Women Role Models in Leadership Positions

Of twenty women leaders, five academicians reported not having female role models as a challenge because they do not have a female as a point of reference and as a source for support and mentoring. Additionally, three out of fifteen academicians (AM7, AH1, & AH8) stated that having female mentors would have greatly facilitated their work in their leadership positions. For example, AH1 explained that having female mentorship on campus, especially for junior faculty, is critical for women who want to make it to leadership positions.

Respondent AH7, an academician holding a high-level position, related that because she did not have a female role model, she had to discover on her own how to communicate and deal with male colleagues and senior administrators. This respondent explained that she had to work hard to gain visibility and to present herself, ideas, and work in front of men in the senior administration and portray it in line with what those senior administrators value:

> In the Board of Deans I had to learn because I learnt that sometimes men have a different way of presenting themselves. They always try to bring around the conversation to their own interest. I was not trained in this political way of working which is to try to move things in your own direction.

Moreover, all of the twelve women leaders who participated in the member-checking of the research study's findings agreed with the prevalence of this challenge and emphasized the need to have more women in senior formal leadership positions as they can provide support for the fellow women in lower and similar leadership positions. AM6, an academician holding a

middle-level position, further explained that there is a need for solidarity among women in all leadership positions because women in lower leadership positions and females who are aspiring to high-ranking positions need this support to succeed.

Experiencing Limited Communication Skill

Of twenty women leaders, four recognized the importance of having excellent communication skills. However, two academicians and one administrator, all in high-level positions, perceived the ability to clearly convey their message to others as a challenge. Respondent MH2, the respondent in a high-level administrative position, explained: "People don't like to communicate in details which causes misunderstanding; clarification and transparency [which] are needed for every day."

Both academicians stated that communication in the form of writing a challenge. Participant AH4, an academician in a high-level position, described "Correspondence …[as] a beautiful challenge, I enjoy it. Because every faculty member has a certain way of corresponding, of writing." On the other hand, the high-level academic leader (AH6) explained that it was difficult for her to translate her research to ordinary presentations for non-academicians to understand; she says: "You have to bridge between research and the outside world. You have to translate your research to a different language. It is a different approach." In addition, Respondent AH6 stated that she also had to learn how to talk to faculty members from different disciplines:

> … so if you want to be a good director and you want to attract different disciplines in the
>
> center you have to learn the language of all of the disciplines. So, when we talk to people

from humanities it is different from when we talk to people from social science and they

want to feel that you are listening to them and you understand what they want...

Managing the Budget

A director of a center, a previous dean, and an administrator of a department perceived

handling the financial aspect in their jobs a challenge. Respondent AH7, a former dean,

explained that in her previous leadership position she "was responsible for the money flow, the

budget, make financial reports…" Although she stated that she was never "interested in

finances", she learned how to handle the financial aspects on the job after assuming her

leadership position and had to work hard until she became good at it. The director of the center,

AH6, explained that she faced a difficulty in "attracting funds so that the center you know

sustains itself or sustains its own research" as she was not trained in this aspect. Lastly, MH3, the

director of a center, narrated that she felt intimidated when she handled the financial aspect of

the department because she was under surveillance when it came to money:

> … it is a huge responsibility because everything dealing with money because it's all you
>
> are always under the spot and you are always being accused of maybe you are leaving
>
> money on the table or you are not. So, it is a very unpleasant.

Not Facing Any Challenges

It was interesting to report that one academic woman leader holding a high-level position,

AH3, answered that she did not face any situations or factors that hindered her from attaining her

current leadership position. She stated: "I wouldn't say there is anything specifically that

hindered me." However, she reflected back on her experience and explained that being appointed

in the same institution that she received her Bachelor's Degree from, in a male dominating field,

and teaching more than the average service courses in the department were challenges she encountered when she was an assistant professor.

Positive External Conditions that Assisted Women in Attaining and Sustaining Formal Leadership Positions at University

Although women leaders considered their experiences in attaining a leadership position a challenging journey, they all spoke about external factors that facilitated the attainment and retention of their leadership positions. Namely, these positive situations are being supported by colleagues, senior management, and families, working in a good environment which is having a healthy and comfortable atmosphere, collaborative team members, and absence of university and local politics, receiving formal leadership training, having a network of connections, being lucky, and having a well-defined university hierarchy and structure. The following section will present these factors and table 10 will show the frequency of each positive situation stated by the women leaders.

Table 10

Facilitators that Assisted the Women Leaders

	Facilitators that Assisted the Women Leaders				
	Academic		Administrative		
	Middle-Level N = 7	High-Level N = 8	Middle-Level N = 2	High-Level N = 3	Total Number of Respondents
Being Supported by Colleagues, Senior Management & Family	7	7	1	1	16
Having a Good Working Environment	4	2	1	1	8
Receiving Formal Leadership Training	1	3	2	2	8
Having a Network of Connections	4	1	0	0	5
Being Lucky	2	3	0	0	5
Institution's Well-Defined Structure (Hierarchy & Bureaucracy)	2	1	0	0	3

Being Supported by Colleagues, Senior Administration and Family

Receiving support from colleagues, staff members, senior administration, and family members is the most recurrent and prominent positive external factor that assisted women leaders to reach and retain their high-ranking positions. This finding was also strongly agreed upon by all twelve respondents who participated in the member-checking interviews.

Receiving Support from Colleagues. Of twenty respondents, nine participants reported that people within the institution, i.e. colleagues and staff members such as executive officers, administrative assistants, secretaries, and senior administrators greatly assisted them in carrying out their leadership responsibilities. Four of these nine respondents stated that they had supportive colleagues. For example, an academician holding a middle-level position (AM5) described her colleagues: "… I'm very lucky and they [faculty members in the same department] are all really nice, really great, really supportive, really helpful." Respondent MM2, an administrator also in a middle-level position explained how she and her colleague support each other:

> We talk and brainstorm, 'heik' we help each other. She has problems in conflict management, I give her ideas; I have problems with creating something new. We encourage each other. This is important to have somebody to talk to … these things, …

In addition, Respondents AH7 and AM6, academicians in high and middle-level positions stated that the staff members were greatly supportive because they were always ready to help and explain the work processes, especially when leaders first assumed their positions. Respondent AH7 explained how the executive officer in the faculty was supportive and informed

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her about the work processes, gave her the correct information to make informed decisions, and was constantly available:

> … I don't know whether people really appreciate that the executive officer that we have…So, I don't know whether I mean women share information better than men. I don't know if I had a[n] executive officer who was a man whether he would really bend backwards to make sure that I learnt.

Receiving Support from Senior Administrators. Nine out of twenty women leaders stated that the senior administrators supported them in their work by trusting them, giving them advice, answering their questions, approving their work, and sometimes defending them. The senior administrators were the Provost, Deans, Chief Operating Officer, President of the Advisory Board, Director of the Program, and leadership teams that had administrators, academicians, Assistant and Associate Deans, and Deans as members. Respondent AM1, an academician holding a middle-level position, explained how the leadership team trusted and supported her work initiatives:

> Certainly, the leadership team and [my] faculty were supportive of a lot of initiatives that I wanted to make in the …[department] and they went with some potentially risky ideas that lead to big return on investment. But now we know that, but at that time, I think it was a leap of faith on their part. So, I think the leadership support in terms of the initiatives that we wanted to start was helpful.

Respondent AM2 explained in the member-checking interview that "it is very important to have a supportive direct senior administrator who believes in you and understands you [to be able to succeed]." Of nine respondents, two said that the Provost assisted them by being

available to answer their questions and helping them handle work situations. Respondent AH7, a high-level academic leader, noted that: "… the Provost was very helpful. I used to go a lot to the Provost." Also, Respondents AM2 and AM5, academicians in middle-level positions explained that the Dean assisted them by supporting and approving their work. Respondent AM5 explained that: "… the past dean was really really supportive as well. As well as the current dean" supportive in her work and aided her in creating a forum where the faculty members can collaborate, learn, and discuss their research interests. Respondent AM2 narrated that the Dean used to defend her and how she handled situations when faculty members would accuse her of performing or handling a situation incorrectly.

In addition to receiving support from the people within the academic institution, Respondent AM3, an academician holding a middle-level position perceived that she received institutional support in the form of a Short-Term Faculty Development Grant from the university. She explained that this grant, which covers a faculty member's expenses for professional development, such as attending a conference, workshop, seminar etc., assisted her in advancing in her academic career:

> When I said that the thing that I the thing that really helped me when I was you know here at the beginning is that I could get from … [the university] a short development grant to go one a year to a conference. This is something that really helped…The only support I'm telling you the only support is that … [the university] provided us with one conference per year and this was our only way to get out and to get in-touch with the rest of the world and to know what is what was happening in the rest of the world.

Receiving Familial Support. Half of the women leaders reported that they also received support from their family members, had a supportive system at home, and unique familial situations. Family members who supported these participants were the husbands, mothers, and fathers. Respondent AH3, a high-level academic leader, stated that both her husband and mother supported and motivated her to attain her current high-ranking position: "I have a very supportive husband, a very certainly and a very ambitious mother who keeps on pushing me." A director of one of the centers, AH6, described how her husband assisted her in her work as follows:

> My husband – because he works in the private sector and he knows what works and what doesn't work in the private sector… was extremely helpful in listening, shaping the presentation, giving good advice at all times…so that for sure I owe it to him.

Additionally, respondents explained that mainly their mothers but also some of their fathers supported them as well. The mothers assisted the women leaders by taking care of their children when they were unavailable. Respondent AM1, an academician holding a middle-level position, explained: "… certainly my mom who basically covered for the parental time that was gone or at least diminished in terms of my responsibility towards the kids." Only Respondents AM2 and MM2, an academician and administrator in middle-level positions stated that their fathers also assisted them in their work. Respondent MM2, a middle-level administrator, narrated how her father helped her in her work: "My dad gives me lots of creative ideas, reading, all of these things."

Contrary to most women leaders, an administrator in a high-level position (MH2) narrated that her husband did not support her in her career. She explained that he wanted her to work in a part-time position to be more available at home.

Furthermore, out of twenty participants, three academicians in high and middle-level positions and one administrator in a high-level position considered that having a support system at home, which included having a baby-sitter and house-help, as facilitators that assisted them in holding their leadership positions. Respondent AM1, an academic holding a middle-level position, explained that she needed the assistance of a baby-sitter and house-helper by explaining that she had to mainly outsource the household duties: "…so hiring baby-sitters and hiring people to come in and do chores that you don't do at the house."

Two respondents out of twenty participants explained that they had unique familial situations that assisted them to reach high-ranking positions. A high-level academic leader, AH3, explained that not having children was a facilitator for her to reach her leadership position: "… I have a personal situation that didn't hinder me, it is the opposite, which is the fact that I don't have children." This is because AH3 does not have to also take care of children at the familial front, she only has household duties. On the other hand, MH2, a high-level administrator, narrated a different familial situation which is losing her father at a respectively young age. His loss motivated her to work hard and persist to succeed: "…losing him gave me strength, determination in my educational and professional journey and consistency. Also, this loss stayed in my mind which triggered me to be like him; his loss affected me a lot…"

Having a Good Work Environment

According to eight of the twenty participants, working in an environment that has a good atmosphere, collaborative team members, and the absence of university and local politics facilitated their work in their current leadership positions. An academician in a middle-level position and another in a high-level position both mentioned that because they work in an environment where the atmosphere is comfortable and healthy, they are able to perform well in their work. Respondent AH8, a high-level academic leader, explained: "It is impossible to do well if the environment is not doing well…" and AM6, an academician in a middle-level position, stated a similar belief by saying: "…I think having … a good atmosphere is actually very important as well."

Additionally, having collaborative team members was perceived by the respondents to be an important factor for leaders in general to succeed in their positions. Participants explained the importance and the added value of having a team and that their success is related to their ability to build and work within a team. During the member-checking interview, Respondent AM2 reported that having a collaborative team among the administrative staff is a "key to the success" of the department and leader. Additionally, an academician in a high-level position, AH8, stated that "…team work is important…", while Respondent AM6, an academic leader in a middle-level position stated that "…I don't want to do a one woman show…". This respondent explained that having a team is important because she can delegate and consult with them.

An administrator in a high-level position, MH3, described that the team's performance, competence, and credibility were reasons she was able to stay in her leadership position: "… my relation with the team is very good. I never treated them as a boss…they feel that I trusted them."

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She narrated that she also established a relationship with the end-clients: "…we have very good relationships with the users…" and "… we were able to get the confidence of the users, [and] the administration, that we are doing a very fair and honest and effective [work]…

Lastly, two middle-level academicians, AM1 and AM5, explained that being uninvolved in politics whether at the government or university level facilitated working comfortably and without distractions. This is because discussing politics and showing affiliation to a particular political party would stereotype the leader which would impede her work. In addition, the leader's credentials and abilities would be disregarded and she would be treated according to her political affiliation. Respondent AM explained that she was not politically affiliated and because of that she was not influenced: "I'm not politically affiliated…I'm not swayed by…I just do what I think is right and I think that has helped."

Receiving Formal Training

Of twenty women leaders, four academicians and four administrators in middle and high-level positions, stated that the formal training that they received facilitated their work in their leadership positions. The respondents considered different forms of training that strengthen their skills in general conducive to their formal leadership training. They provided examples that included obtaining an educational degree, attending courses, conferences, seminars, and workshops, and having a mentor. Three out of fifteen academicians, who have not received any training themselves, highly recommended training and pointed out that they would advise junior faculty members who want to assume leadership positions to obtain formal leadership training.

Respondents MM2, MH2 and MH3, administrators in middle and high-level positions, explained that they benefited from attending leadership training in the form of courses,

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conferences, seminars, and workshops because they learned new technical concepts and acquired new skills. Moreover, a middle-level academic leader, AM1, stated that her Master's degree in Business Administration greatly assisted her because she learned the technical terminologies and acquired the managerial skills that compensated for her junior academic rank in a leadership position. Another example, MM2 a middle-level administrator, described how her formal leadership training facilitated her work:

> It showed me lots of important things … knowledge skills and abilities … it gave me confidence… I'm glad that I was exposed to them, I took them … [because] it made me realize there are so many different ways of doing things to learn something new…I wouldn't have done it. I wouldn't have done a good job.

Moreover, the only respondent who had a mentor explained that he was supportive by giving her advice, ideas, and making her visible in the university and academic community. Respondent AH5, a high-level academician, narrated that "You have to have a mentor" and described the importance of having mentor:

> … throughout he was very supportive. You know he helped me with ideas or you know when I was in bed for weeks… the mentor, for example, can help by, let's say, they can appoint you to a committee or they can send you to give a lecture or you know it is like little things that put you in the picture.

Because AH5 believes in this form of formal leadership training and its benefits, she is trying to build a mentorship program in her faculty.

Furthermore, three out of fifteen academicians stated that they believe junior faculty members should receive formal leadership training in management because in academia they are

not trained to manage nor lead a center, department, faculty, or even university nor to perform basic administrative duties, which include managing the budget for an event. From her personal experience, AH6 stated that if she knew she would assume a leadership position, she would have deliberately sought formal training in managing a center:

> [I would] … have taken courses about management, about fundraising, and about the mission of the center itself, how to run a center in academia, and how to make sure that the center takes a regional and global goal…I would have done it totally different because you know …I don't have a training to run such a center…

Having a Network of Connections

Of the twenty women leaders, five academicians stated that their network of connections with fellow colleagues facilitated their attainment and retention of their leadership positions. In addition, these five women leaders advised junior female academicians to establish relationships with fellow colleagues because it would be resourceful to them and because female academicians would be more visible both in academia and in their university. Respondent AM3, an academician in a middle-level position, stated that "…I established for myself a network of connections; it is very important" because through it she was able to stay up-to-date in her work. These connections helped her make acquaintances and colleagues in different parts of the world who were willing to share with her their resources such as a newly published research studies.

Moreover, Respondents AM1, AM5, AM7 and AH1, academicians in middle and high-level positions, explained that by establishing relationships with fellow colleagues, they were acknowledged in their respective fields, which makes them prominent faculty members.

Additionally, AM1 believes that through connections, an academician would be able to receive more grants that would assist her to advance in her career:

> … it gets you exposure to other people and if you are able to do it successfully then it also gives other people visibility to your to what you are able to do…So, parts of getting funding and grants and all of that is networking and being more open about networking being open about relationship building; all of those are things that end up paying more…

Being Lucky

Surprisingly, three out of twenty women leaders and two out of twelve women in the member-checking interviews believe that being lucky assisted the attainment and retention of their current leadership positions. Only one of the twenty women leaders (AH3) narrated that she felt lucky for being nominated and appointed to all of her leadership positions: "…frankly, I was lucky in a way… the fact that I got these appointments from Dean … and then … the President…" The remaining four academicians explained that they were lucky for receiving support from fellow colleagues within the department and from the senior administration. AH8, a high-level academic leader, described how she felt lucky for receiving support from the senior administrators: "I consider myself lucky because at the time I came to … [the university], the senior people wanted me to succeed. They gave me the opportunity, they took chance [on me] …" However, AH1, a high-level academic leader disagreed with this finding during the member-checking interview and stated that "luck works against you and not with you." It seems that AH1 does not believe in luck. According to her, a woman leader succeeds by having the necessary credentials and working extremely hard.

Institution's Well-Defined Structure (Hierarchy & Bureaucracy)

The last facilitator that was reported by three out of twenty respondents, all academicians in middle and high-level positions, narrated that the hierarchy and bureaucracy of the center or department that they work in, assisted them in succeeding in their leadership positions. An academician in a high-level position, AH6, explained that because of her high position on the university hierarchy she was "directly reporting to the Provost", which "gave her as a director a little bit of freedom to go and meet people…"

Respondent AH6 further stated that the job description as the director does not mandate her to spend all of her time just working for the center; she has the flexibility to continue her research and teaching, which are also integral aspects in her work. Another academician in a middle-level position, AM6, narrated that she accepted the leadership position on the condition that she can amend the department's structure by adding two directors in addition to her position of chairperson. Respondent AM6 explained that through this modified structure, there is shared governance which enabled her to fulfill her responsibilities.

Summary

The aim of this research study was to explore the journeys of women who assumed senior formal leadership positions in a university and to discover the challenges and facilitators that they faced. The sample consisted of twenty women leaders where fifteen were academicians, while the remaining five were administrators.

Of the twenty participants, 75% were chosen or nominated to assume a leadership position where the majority of them were academicians. Only three administrators and two academicians applied to their current positions. These women leaders believed that they have

been appointed to a higher-ranking leadership position because they have certain exceptional leadership characteristics and abilities such as being devoted to their work and the ability to build and work in a team. The second most recurrent reason for their nomination to their current leadership positions that nineteen out of twenty participants mentioned is possessing what they considered to be necessary credentials of a leader and they include: having a strong academic background, a solid research profile, and constantly developing themselves and their work. The third reason the women leaders believe led to their appointment to their current positions is because they worked hard. These participants explained that they took on additional duties and responsibilities and served the institution by going "over and beyond the call of duty". A fourth reason perceived by these women is their willingness to assume leadership duties and responsibilities such as being members on committees, managing more units, and becoming the chairperson of a department. Moreover, eight out of twenty participants believed that because they held previous leadership positions, it aided their nomination in attaining a high-ranking position which was the fifth reason. Also, these women believed that their favorable reputation established through their rapport with their colleagues and senior administration aided them in their current leadership positions which is considered the sixth reason. Lastly, only two women leaders narrated that they are in their current high-ranking positions by accident.

Women leaders reported a total of nine challenges that they faced in attaining and holding a leadership position. These challenges can be categorized under three themes: challenges that impeded women's attainment of the position, their retention, and challenges that impacted both the attainment and retention of their leadership positions. Experiencing limitations in the institution's rules and regulations, specifically in the promotion guidelines, is an obstacle that hindered women's attainment to leadership positions because being promoted is the first step to

ascend the career ladder. The following six obstacles impeded the women leaders' retention of their current positions: balancing competing demands, working in a challenging environment, having uncooperative colleagues, having limited resources, experiencing limited communication skills, and managing the budget. This is because the women leaders had to balance between the demands of their family, academic and administrative duties. Also, the participants had to work in a competitive atmosphere with uncooperative colleagues who challenge their authority. In addition, the women leaders had to work despite the fact that their colleagues and senior administrators did not appreciate leadership roles as valued service work. Moreover, the participants had to deliver outcomes with limited resources. On the other hand, not receiving formal training, being considered an outsider, having few women role models, and facing unsupportive university administration are obstacles that impeded women from attaining and sustaining their leadership positions. Not receiving formal training hampered women leaders from holding and retaining high-ranking positions because they did not acquire the technical skills and knowledge to be leaders and to lead effectively. By not having a network of connections, few women role models, and unsupportive university administration, it was difficult for women to be nominated to high-ranking positions and they were not given support to advance and succeed in these positions.

Lastly, the women leaders described six facilitators that assisted them in attaining and retaining their current leadership positions. The most prominent facilitator was being supported by their colleagues, senior management and families. Eight out of twenty women reported the following as external factors that assisted them in reaching and holding high-ranking positions: working in a good environment where the atmosphere is friendly, working with team members who are cooperative and having formal training. Additionally, having a network of connections

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and being lucky for having supportive colleagues, senior administrators and family members were facilitators that were stated by 20% of the participants. Lastly, only three out of twenty women leaders reported that the institution's well-defined structure, specifically the hierarchy and bureaucracy, as an external factor that aided them in reaching and holding their leadership positions.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's aim is to explore the personal journeys of women leaders who reached and retained their senior formal leadership positions in a higher education institution in Lebanon. The purpose of this study was to discover how the participants were able to reach their high-ranking positions and the challenges and facilitators that they faced both as aspiring and acting leaders. In addition, the study attempted to understand the experience of women and the steps they undertook to obtain their current positions. The majority of the findings were aligned with the results of Western and Arab research studies. However, some findings were unique to the Lebanese context, such as building a favorable reputation to be appointed to a leadership position, overcoming political intervention impeding the attainment of a high-ranking position, and having the support of colleagues and senior administrators. Accordingly, this chapter will first discuss the research findings that emerged as answers to the stated research questions, then it will present the conclusion, researcher's reflection, and finally the implications of this study.

The discussion of the results is organized into three main headings: the first section discusses the women's journey, specifically their experiences on how they reached their leadership positions. The second section discusses the obstacles that were reported by women leaders in the case-study university under the following headings: the society's expectations of a woman, gender stereotype of females and difficult working conditions. Finally, the third section discusses the findings, which included the positive external conditions that were organized into two categories: 1) supportive situations and 2) facilitators experienced by the women leaders.

Next, the chapter will present the conclusion and the researcher's reflection. Lastly, it will conclude with a presentation of the study's practical and theoretical recommendations.

Woman's Journey to a Senior Leadership Position

The study at hand found three different ways for women to be appointed to leadership positions: getting nominated, deliberately applying, and getting promoted. Regardless of the method used, all participants described assuming a leadership position as a journey of meeting a set of requirements set by the participants themselves rather than explicitly outlined or disseminated by the university's administration. The section below will discuss the different processes of being appointed and the necessary criteria needed to assume leadership positions.

The Process of Being Appointed

The three different processes by which the participants were appointed to their leadership positions will be discussed in this section. First, the study found that the majority of women academicians, in different ranks, and few administrators were appointed to their leadership positions through nomination. These women stated that they did not seek their current positions nor did they set attaining a high-ranking position as a career goal. This result resonates with a study conducted by Madsen's (2007), which revealed that all ten participants did not seek to become the next president of a university as a career goal. Nomination as a method of appointment is widespread in academia as it was reported by the majority of the studies that explored women academic leaders in Canada (Acker, 2014), the U.S. (Huang, 2016), Nigeria (Odejide, 2003), and Malaysia (Morley et al., 2016), in addition to administrative staff in the U.S. (Johnsrud, 1991).

The depicted appointment experience can only be partially explained by the university's recruitment policy, namely, how women reach low and middle-level leadership positions. The policy in the case-study university states that lower and middle-level leadership positions do not require search processes that include advertisements, and that the only processes for women academicians to hold low and middle-level positions are either to be nominated or to actively seek these positions by self-promotion. On the other hand, the policy mandates elaborate searches and advertisements for vacancies in high-ranking positions. While the policy explains why the majority of women academicians in middle-level positions were appointed through nomination, the results obtained for women in the high-ranking leadership positions contradicted the recruitment policy. Results show that the academic women holding high-ranking positions were also nominated.

Accordingly, the women leaders' (especially the academicians) pathway to advancement to leadership positions depended largely on the sponsorship of a senior administrator who nominated them when he thought the time was suitable for these women to hold their current positions. Johnsrud (1991) defines sponsorship as a situation where "an individual in a position of influence recommends or promotes an individual as a good candidate for a particular position" (p. 127). Johnsrud (1991) explains that sponsorship is most recurrent in senior leadership positions because it is difficult for the administration to measure individual characteristics, such as trustworthiness. Based on the results, the case-study university senior administration resorted to the "sponsorship" method for appointing female to the high-ranking position in violation of its own internal policy. Applying the "sponsorship" method might suggest that the university administration wanted the extra reassurance that the women they nominated are suitable candidates because they are familiar with, trust, and rely on these women.

While Johnsrud (1991) explains that individuals are usually sponsored by people who share the same characteristics as them, including gender, race, and ethnicity, which often helps to maintain the university's status quo in terms of diversity. However, the research study at hand revealed that in most cases senior male administrators sponsored female academicians and administrators. There are two plausible explanations for why senior male administrators sponsored females and not male academicians and administrators. First, this finding could be the effect of the university's administration strategic decision to support and promote women faculty members and administrators to have a more gender inclusive leadership team. The second reason that might have caused senior administrators to sponsor women is that top management wants to hire individuals who have specific traits, credentials, and skills that are most suitable to hold leadership positions regardless of gender. Given that most women worked hard to grow professionally and to ensure high credentials, the highly-qualified females were an obvious choice for an administration seeking the best qualified candidates.

The second method by which the women leaders were appointed to their high-ranking positions is by purposefully applying to it. This method of appointment is less frequent than being nominated because only a few participants (one academician and two administrators) in this study stated this process. A study by Hertneky (2012) supported this finding by concluding that women academicians rarely apply to high-ranking positions as the study's results showed that only a small number of women academicians did so. The women leaders who applied to their positions usually possess a unique trait of being ambitious. This is because when they reached a career plateau in terms of professional growth in their previous positions, they decided to take on new work challenges by seeking other work opportunities within the university. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) support the claim that women in leadership positions are ambitious because

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they reported in their research study that women in various occupations applied to their current positions because they had set attaining a high-ranking position as a career goal.

The last process by which women leaders were appointed to their current positions was through promotion and through having their positions created for them. This method applied to two women administrators in this research study. Women administrators worked hard and gained a rich experience in their previous positions. However, after a certain period of time, these women administrators felt that they deserved to be compensated by being promoted for their hard work and for being experienced in their fields. As such, senior administrators were conscious to react to these requests. Since there are not always vacant positions, the university's top management created positions tailored for these deserving women administrators.

This process of promoting administrators by creating positions for them in higher educational institutions is a common form of career advancement (Johnsrud, 1991). Johnsrud (1991) explained that the university's administration decides to create new positions to foster the administrator's career development and advancement because in his/her previous position he/she gained knowledge and skills and showed real professional growth (Johnsrud, 1991). As the administrator's growth expanded and the previous position was no longer professionally satisfying, a new position was created for her with a new title, salary adjustment, and job description. As such, the institution recognizes "the additional growth and changing the title, salary, or job content essentially creating a new position for the employee who has reshaped the position" (Johnsrud, 1991, p. 128).

Having discussed the three different methods women university leaders experience in obtaining their current leadership positions, it is noteworthy to mention that the paths of

academicians are slightly different from those of administrators. On one hand, academicians have to work hard to be recognized by the senior administration, who subsequently nominates them to leadership positions. On the other hand, administrators are more proactive than the academicians because they actively seek promotion and recognition for the extra work they put in.

Necessary Criteria to Assume a Leadership Position

The women stated that they were appointed because they fulfilled the necessary criteria to hold high-ranking positions in the case-study university. The criteria for women that are perceived as a requirement include: possessing distinguishing leadership characteristics and abilities, having high qualifications, working hard, and holding previous leadership positions.

All of the twenty women leaders in this study reported that they believed possessing distinguishing leadership characteristics and abilities, such as devotion and passion, self-confidence, determination, honesty, social skills, courage, and communication and managerial skills, allowed them to be appointed to high-ranking positions. While the international literature is filled with claims advancing that leaders in general should possess similar traits and skills, it points to the fact that possessing these characteristics and abilities is exceptionally critical for women leaders. For instance, Acker (2014), Bain and Cummings (2000), and Morley et al. (2016) revealed that a leader should be devoted and passionate about his/her work and in serving the university, while BlackChen (2015) and Cubillo and Brown (2003) stated that a leader should be self-confident. Also, findings from different research studies showed that for an individual to be appointed to a leadership position he/she should possess a broad spectrum of distinguishing skills that include: being determined (Morley et al., 2016), honest (BlackChen, 2015), sociable

(BlackChen, 2015) courageous (Cubillo & Brown, 2003) and having the proper communication (Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015; Huang, 2016; Morley et al. 2016) and managerial skills (Morley et al. 2016).

There are two reasons why women university leaders should possess distinguishing leadership characteristics and abilities. First, women who have these traits and skills will stand out from a pool of competitive applicants, which some of the respondents in this study believe are innate characteristics where an individual is either born a leader or not. Second, possessing these distinguishing characteristics and abilities can facilitate the woman leader's job. According to research, university women leaders need to be persistent, patient, and self-confident to overcome challenges in their work to be able to succeed in a male dominating environment (BlackChen, 2015). Accordingly, they need to be able to build and work in a team to better achieve the desired work outcomes and foster collaboration and a healthy and comfortable work atmosphere; all achievements perceived to be a must to earn their merit for the leadership position.

Another criterion that the women leaders in the case-study university fulfilled is having qualified credentials that include advanced educational degrees, such as PhDs, strong research profiles and the willingness to continuously develop themselves and their work. In fact, research studies conducted in the West, Asia, and Arab regions revealed the importance of women leaders having a strong academic background (Al-Lamky, 2006; Carter, 2009; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Johnson, 2014; Johnsrud, 1991; Mohd Rasdi & Abdul Wahat, 2005; Morley et al., 2016; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011; and Wang et al., 2013), solid research profiles (Armenti, 2004; Bain & Cummings, 2000; BlackChen, 2015; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Leathwood & Read, 2008; Mohd Rasdi & Abdul Wahat, 2005; Morley, 2014; Morley et al., 2016; Tessens et al., 2011), and

the ability to develop personally and professionally (Al-Lamky, 2006; Cox & Salsberry, 2012; Hertneky, 2012; Huang, 2016; Madsen, 2007; Nakitende, 2012; and Rabas, 2013) to obtain and retain their leadership positions.

Working hard is also a requirement that the participants in the case-study university reported they had to fulfill to hold high-ranking positions. The women leaders in the case-study university worked hard through serving the university by going "beyond the call of duty" (AH1) in taking on additional responsibilities. Research studies conducted in Greece (Papadimitriou, 2016), Malaysia (Mohd Rasdi & Abdul Wahat, 2005) and the U.S. (Huang, 2016) revealed that women academicians were able to advance to high-ranking positions because they worked hard. Other studies, also in various contexts, described the intensity of the hard work by reporting that women leaders in the Arab (Al-Lamky, 2006), Asian (Nguyen, 2012), and Western regions (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Pyke, 2013) worked at least twice as hard as their male colleagues even though they had the same credentials. An example of working extra hard reported by the women leaders in the case-study university includes always accepting additional duties such as being members of committees. This finding resonates with the studies of Hertneky (2012) and Madsen (2007) which reported that women leaders did obtain their leadership positions because they accepted supplementary tasks, such as serving the university by agreeing to be members on committee(s) (Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015; Huang, 2016). Taking on additional responsibilities is helpful for women to be able to hold their high-ranking positions. Indeed, Cheung and Halpern (2000) explained that assuming extra leadership duties unintentionally prepares women to become leaders by exposing them to some of the facets of a leadership position.

The last criterion for women to hold high-ranking positions is to have accumulated experience in leadership positions. Almost half of the participants believed that this experience

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aided in their appointment to their high-ranking positions. The women leaders' counterparts in

the U.S. and in Canada also reported that one of the credentials that facilitated assuming and

maintaining high-ranked leadership positions is having gained prior experiences in leadership

positions (Acker, 2014; Johnsrud, 1991; Madsen, 2007). Madsen's (2007) research study

supported this claim when she reported that "All [ten participants] had [previous leadership]

positions that helped them learn to work well with all types of people, the ability to solve

problems, and the capacity to provide leadership" (p. 21-22).

Challenges Faced by University Women Leaders

Throughout the women's journeys to reach and sustain leadership positions in a higher

education institution, they faced several obstacles. These will be discussed under three themes

highlighting where they stemmed from; namely, the society's expectations of a woman, the

gender stereotype of a female and difficult working conditions. The obstacles that originated

from the society's expectations and its gender stereotyping were reported to be difficult for

women to overcome since it involves altering societal values and people's mindsets. Indeed,

societal norms, especially in the Arab context, expects women to stay at home and look after the

children and not to work and advance in their careers. Also, the gender stereotype of a female is

that she is a follower and cannot lead; reserving effective leadership exclusively for males. The

above results reflect that society has not yet fully accepted the fact that women have entered the

workforce and that they are entitled to assume senior formal leadership positions. Accordingly,

each of these three categories is separately discussed below.

Society's Expectations of a Woman

The first category, the society's expectations of a woman, resulted in the emergence of the following two challenges that university women leaders face: balancing between the competing demands of family and work and not having a network of high power connections. Cialdini (2007) explained that an individual behaves in a specific manner not only to comply with the law but also to conform with the perceptions of others of what is deemed a suitable behavior which is labelled as the society's expectations of an individual. These two obstacles are prominent and frequently reported by research studies that have been conducted in different contexts and occupations. Researchers conducted studies in Oman (Al-Lamky, 2006), Malaysia (Morley et al., 2016), and the U.S. (BlackChen, 2015; Diehl, 2014) in diverse professions and reported that the most recurrent obstacle woman leaders face is the ability to balance the demands of their careers and that of their families. In addition, these research studies revealed that women were denied access to information that is necessary for their work because they do not have a network of connections as they are not members of an informal male group in the workforce.

Women leaders face these two obstacles because of the society's expectation that females belong at home and not in the workforce. As such, they rarely receive the acknowledgment, support or encouragement that is needed to pursue high ranking leadership position. For example, taking care of the household, children, and representing the family in social gatherings is perceived to be exclusively a woman's duty in masculine or patriarchic environments such as Lebanon, or Oman, Kenya and Malaysia and others (Al-Lamky, 2006; Jamali et al., 2005; Johnson, 2014; Morley, 2005a; Morley et al., 2016; Odhiambo, 2011; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). Surprisingly, even research studies conducted by Lillie (2016) in different European countries,

which are not considered masculine societies as per Hofstede's dimensions, also reported that societal norms consider that it is solely a woman's duty to take care of the home. Therefore, even though masculine societies expect that a female should first be a wife where her primary obligation is to take care of the family and domestic duties and mother and not a career woman, this expectation is also evident in non-patriarchic environments, which implies that it is a worldwide challenge. Accordingly, even if a woman does enter the workforce, her male colleagues will not consider her their equal and will not welcome her into the 'old boys' club'. As such, she will be denied crucial information, know-how tips, and informal communication channels to male colleagues who control access to formal leadership positions and can significantly influence and support the women's career development.

Gender Stereotype

The second category is gender stereotyping of females in the workforce. The challenges that emerged from the prevalence of this practice and norms were reported by the women leaders in this study to manifest in the following: females are not fit to work, male colleagues still challenge woman's authority, scarcity of women role models in leadership positions who provide mentorship for aspiring women leaders, and overburdening females by assigning them care work at the university in addition to heavier teaching load and service responsibilities. A substantial body of literature reported similar obstacles faced by female leaders in different occupations (Afiouni & Karam, 2014; Bain & Cummings, 2000; BlackChen, 2015; Diehl, 2014; Hannum et al., 2015; Hertneky, 2012; Jamali et al., 2005; Johnson, 2014; Leisyte & Hosch-Dayican, 2016; Mabokela & Mlambo, 2016; Morley, 2014; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; Morley et al., 2016; Nakitende, 2012; Odhiambo, 2011; Onsongo, 2006; Roos & Gatta, 2009; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011; Tomàs et al., 2010; UNESCO, 2002).

The first stereotype emerged because females are perceived by their male colleagues as unfit to work since they prioritize their families over their careers. This finding was reported in the research studies of Afiouni and Karam (2017), Jamali et al. (2005), and Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) by women leaders in various occupations in Lebanon. On the other hand, Afiouni and Karam (2017) reported that there are a few research studies that revealed that women are conforming to the gender stereotype of prioritizing their families over their careers by describing how women chose careers that would accommodate their familial duties. This finding might explain the nature of the barrier that women are facing. Despite their aspiration, women seek societal approval and avoid being labeled as outcasts. As such, they often choose to conform to those expectations rather than follow their emerging career goals, loosing unwillingly the hard battle of breaking the dominant stereotype. The more women conform to the societal code they give more instances for those [majority men] who hold to the stereotype that "all" women put family life first. The second stereotype which is 'men lead and women follow' was reported by Morley et al. (2016) where scholars explained that the societal norm is for men to be the leaders and for women to be followers. Researchers offered another explanation for why this stereotype exists; namely, the different leadership styles between men and women (Loughlin et al., 2011; Peterson, 2016; Shain, 2000; Wang et al., 2013). Female leaders do not behave in the same 'male managerial way' (Loughlin et al., 2011) which allows their male colleagues, irrespective of their ranks, to challenge their authority by disregarding their directives and disrespecting their professional judgment. The third stereotype emerged because females are perceived to be emotional, soft-hearted, and unambitious individuals (Jamali et al., 2005), and as such, should assume the teaching and service duties in the university while the males focus on research and administrative responsibilities. These explanations support the glass-ceiling phenomenon,

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specifically the societal factor, where society does not accept women's attainment of leadership positions (Bain & Cummings, 2000).

Difficult Working Conditions

The third set of challenges that emerged is working in difficult conditions. These were manifested in the following: working in an uncomfortable atmosphere, having a heavy workload, limiting university structure, lack of resources, not receiving formal leadership training, and not receiving support from the university's senior administration. These six challenges are discussed below.

The university women leaders in the study at hand reported that working in an uncomfortable atmosphere is a first challenge. This atmosphere is described as competitive with uncooperative team members. When team members do not collaborate with one another tensions arise, which creates an uncomfortable working atmosphere. Research studies conducted in different European countries, England, and in the U.S. (Brechelmacher et al., 2015; Cahill et al., 2015; Huang, 2016; Kwiek & Antonowicz, 2015) reported that academic leaders had to compete with each other for research grants because grants are a limited resource. Also, a few researchers such as Cahill et al. (2015) and Kehm (2015) explained that tensions arise between colleagues because some do not want to work in teams due to the leader's low-ranking position or because they have not agreed on common terms with fellow colleagues, leaders, and senior administrators. Accordingly, this competitiveness and lack of cooperation between team members creates an uncomfortable atmosphere which is difficult to work, lead, and to advance in.

The second challenge is manifested in the huge amount of and quality of work that is required from women academic leaders placing them at a disadvantage as they try balancing between the competing demands of academic and administrative duties. Fumasoli et al. (2015) explained that academicians have to work long hours to fulfill their teaching, service and research duties in order to produce exemplary work to survive in the fierce competition in academia (Leisyte & Hosch-Dayican, 2016). Additionally, as women academic leaders, they have to balance between their administrative and academic duties (Acker, 2014; Cahill et al., 2015; Clarke et al., 2015). This intense amount of work reflects the difficult working conditions women academic leaders' experience.

The institution's limiting structure, specifically the bureaucracy and policies and procedures, was a third challenge faced by the women leaders in the study at hand. The university's bureaucratic structure impedes the women leaders' work because of the additional paperwork that they have to fill and the number of people that they have to report to (Kehm, 2015; Moraru et al., 2015). As for the promotion rules and regulations, which are a form of the university's policies and procedures, these are usually biased against women (Bailyn, 2003; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; Tomàs et al., 2010). Bailyn (2003) explained that promotion guidelines are biased against women because the criteria they are evaluated by has been set by men and based on men's experiences. Accordingly, these two aspects of the university's structure indicate that women leaders work in difficult conditions.

A fourth challenge reported by the university women leaders in this study is the lack of resources in terms of money, infrastructure, and human resources. A substantial body of the literature revealed that the most dominant form of limited resources reported by academic leaders is having access to "diminishing" (Cahill et al., 2015, p. 277), "few resources for

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research" (Kehm, 2015, p. 189), and "limited amount of money" (Moraru et al., 2015, p. 162). This lack of resources impedes the women academic leader from producing valuable research, thus affecting her career advancement. Additionally, Acker (2014), Afiouni and Karam (2017), and Al-Ahmadi (2011) reported that women leaders were not provided with adequate infrastructures and were understaffed, hampering them from performing their work. As a result, women having access to limited resources leads to difficult work conditions that they have to endure.

Not receiving formal leadership training was reported as a fifth challenge by the women leaders in this research. This obstacle is prevalent in different contexts. Research studies conducted in Europe (Kehm, 2015), Britain (Cahill et al., 2015; Marshall, 2010), Canada (Acker, 2014), Malaysia (Morley et al., 2016), and Arab countries (Afiouni & Karam, 2017) revealed that few if any academic leaders received any form of formal training. Academic leaders in lower, middle, (Cahill et al., 2015; Marshall, 2010) and high-level positions (Kehm, 2015) stated that they need training to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge that are needed in their leadership positions, as well as training on how to lead. The research studies of Afiouni and Karam (2017), Al-Ahmadi (2011), and Onsongo (2006) provided two explanations for why women do not receive formal training. The first reason which is explained by Afiouni and Karam (2017) is that institutions do not perceive females as dedicated employees or 'keepers' because they will get married, start a family, and leave the workforce; therefore, there is no need to invest in professionally developing these females. Al-Ahmadi (2011) and Onsongo (2006) provided the second explanation for women in Saudi Arabia and Kenya not receiving formal leadership training because they were not given access to any training opportunities. Since women were not

provided with proper training to assume leadership positions, they had to explore through trial-and-error methods to learn how to perform their work.

Not receiving support from the university's administration was the last challenge the women leaders in this study stated as facing. This obstacle is somewhat uncommon in the international literature because only two research studies (Cahill et al., 2015; Kehm (2015) revealed academic leaders were unsupported by the universities' top management, which impeded their advancement and work. The women leaders in Moraru et al.'s (2015) study provided an example of how they perceived that the university's administration was not supporting them. According to those women, the top management did not provide the women leaders with enough training to facilitate their work. Since women leaders were not receiving support from the university's senior administration, they were unable to adequately perform their work, which led to working in difficult conditions.

Positive External Conditions that Assisted Women in Attaining and Sustaining Formal Leadership Positions at University

This third section will discuss the positive external conditions that assisted the women leaders to reach and sustain their high-ranking positions. There are two types of positive conditions: supportive factors without which women would be unable to ascend the career ladder and facilitators that aided and made it easier for women leaders to hold and retain their high-ranking positions. The details of these positive external conditions are discussed below.

Supportive Situations Experienced by Women Leaders

The women leaders in the case-study university reported that they experienced two supportive situations. The first is receiving exceptional support from their families, colleagues,

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and senior administrators and the second is having a network of connections. The women leaders explained that not only did they receive support from their families, colleagues, and senior administrators but also had a well-established support system at home. Additionally, a few participants described unique familial situations that supported their advance. These unique situations included not having children and losing their parents.

Almost all the women leaders in this research study reported that being supported by their family members made it possible for them to hold and retain their positions. The international research studies that explored the lives of women leaders also unanimously reported that women were able to assume and retain their high-ranking positions because their family members – mainly parents and spouses – supported them (Al-Lamky, 2006; Carter, 2009; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Davis, 2012; Hannum et al., 2015; Isaac et al., 2009; Johnson, 2014; Karam et al., 2013; Lillie, 2016; Mohd Rasdi & Abdul Wahat, 2005; Morley, 2014; Nguyen, 2012). African-American women academic leaders described forms of familial support which are families teaching these women important life values they currently hold and their parents' sacrifices and motivation for their daughters (Huang, 2016). Similarly, the women leaders in this study reported that they received support from their families because Lebanon is a communal society where family members and friends share "the demands of daily chores", subsequently helping women leaders balance between their familial and work duties (Akar & Mouchantaf, 2013, p. 24).

In addition, participants reported that they received support from their colleagues and the university's top management. The participants also stated that they felt lucky to receive such support. These findings were not evident in the available literature, except for a study conducted by Henkel (2016), which only mentioned that some women leaders were supported by their departmental colleagues.

Also, a few women leaders in the study at hand explained that they had support systems at home which included having domestic workers who live with the women and assist them to take care of the household and their children. The available research studies revealed that women leaders in places like Oman, Lebanon, and Malaysia (Akar & Mouchantaf, 2013; Al-Lamky, 2006; Mohd Rasdi & Abdul Wahat, 2005) had such support systems. This supportive situation was prevalent in these countries because it is a norm in these societies in addition to being affordable (Al-Lamky, 2006; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

Only one respondent reported that she had a unique familial situation, being childless, that she considered gave her an advantage and supported her advancement to a leadership position. Only the research study of Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) which was also conducted in Lebanon on women managers revealed that childless women felt they were at an advantage from women managers who had children because they had less responsibilities and more time to focus on their work. The participant in the research study at hand stated the same explanation of how she perceived not having children a supportive situation. Having fewer responsibilities at the home front will enable the women leaders to better balance the competing demands between their work and families and allow them to focus more on their career advancements.

The second supportive situation that the women leaders reported in this study is having access to a network of connections. Scholars agree that women leaders form networks of connections because they are perceived by society as less powerful leaders who work in a male-dominated environment. Nokkala et al. (2016) narrated in their research study that there are three reasons individuals seek forming a network of connections and these reasons are not mutually exclusive. The first reason is that individuals working together on a shared task can

lead to establishing a professional relationship. The second is individuals have common interests

and values so they are able to relate with each other. Lastly, individuals form networks to have

access to more influential people who can assist them in different aspects of their careers.

Additionally, Malaysian (Mohd Rasdi & Abdul Wahat, 2005; Morley et al., 2016) and American

academic women leaders from different origins (Huang, 2016; Mabokela & Mlambo, 2016)

revealed that they form network of connections to be affiliated with powerful and senior

colleagues who will be able to assist them in their career advancements. Similarly, women in this

study explained that to be able to advance, aspiring women leaders associate themselves with the

more powerful, senior, male colleagues in the institution. Akar and Mouchantaf (2013) explain

that, in Lebanon, women rely on their network of connections, which predominantly includes

men, to provide work opportunities for women. This need to form networks with powerful men

reinforces women's need for men to succeed in the workplace.

Facilitators Experienced by Women Leaders

This research study revealed that there are three positive external conditions that the

respondents categorized as factors that facilitated their advancement into leadership position. The

first condition is receiving formal training, the second is working in a good environment, and the

third is not being politically affiliated with the local and university politics. These three

facilitators will be discussed below.

Receiving formal leadership training is the first facilitator the women leaders reported in

this study. The participants received different forms of formal training that included attending

workshops, conferences, and seminars, obtaining an educational degree, and mentoring. This

result is echoed in the international literature. The research studies conducted by Afiouni and

Karam (2014), Airini et al. (2011), BlackChen (2015), Carter (2009), Davis (2012), Hannum et al. (2015), Huang (2016), and Pyke (2013) reported that these women were mentored which facilitated their attainment to high-ranking positions. The research study conducted by Morris and Laipple (2015) revealed that academic leaders received another form of formal training, which consisted of receiving coursework in related fields, such as business administration, leadership and human relations, industrial-organizational psychology, and behavioral psychology. Accordingly, women academic leaders who received formal training perceived it as a facilitator because the training made it easier for them to lead and perform the technical aspects in their jobs.

The second facilitator that women leaders stated in this study is working in a good environment, which includes a healthy atmosphere and collaborative team members. The university women leaders stated that if they were not working in a comfortable atmosphere they would not have been able to reach their current positions. This result resonated with the findings of Papadimitriou's (2016) research study, which reported that women academicians needed to work in a comfortable atmosphere to be able to advance in their careers. Similar to the women leaders in this study, academic leaders in various European countries reported that it is important for leaders to possess the ability to build and work in a team because it fosters a comfortable working environment which facilitates the leaders' succession and advancement (Clarke et al., 2015; Fumasoli et al., 2015; Moraru et al., 2015). For instance, women presidents, whose origins are African, Asian, and Latin, explained that while having a team is a facilitator, it is" the right team in place [which] included advisors that helped them be successful in their presidencies" (Huang, 2016, p. 166). As a result, working in a good environment enables women leaders to reach and sustain high-ranking positions.

The last facilitator that seem unique to the context of the participants in this study is not being politically affiliated and not participating in the university's politics. Respondents explain that being a "politically neutral" leader allow the aspiring woman leader to make decisions according to her own judgements without being pressured to abide by a political party's choices. The respondents believe that in a context plagued by nepotism and where political affiliation rather than credentials determine who will be granted a leadership position, distinguishing oneself as qualified "neutral" candidate worked as an advantage that increased their chances in reaching the leadership positions. Therefore, the women leaders believed that being neutral facilitated their attainment and retention of their high-ranking positions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the journey of women who attained senior formal leadership positions in a higher education institution in Lebanon, to examine the personal endeavors these women undertook, to pinpoint the challenges they faced and the external factors that facilitated their attainment of leadership positions at the university. This research study's findings reemphasized that there are few women leaders in high-ranking positions in higher education institutions and explained the reasons for this phenomenon. This section will discuss this phenomenon and the explanations for its existence.

The majority of women leaders in universities in various contexts hold low and middle-level positions (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Jamali et al., 2005; Mabokala & Mlambo, 2016; Zhong & Guo, 2016). Rarely do we find women leaders in any context in the highest leadership positions. The results in this research study mirrored this phenomenon. In fact, findings in the study at hand showed that seven out of twenty participants

occupied chairperson positions, which are the lowest-level leadership positions in the university. Furthermore, throughout the university's history, only two women have held high leadership positions, which included that of Associate Provost and Vice-President. Nevertheless, no woman has ever occupied the position of Provost, Chief Operating Officer, Executive Vice-President, or President. The absence of women in these positions indicates that women have yet to hold senior formal leadership positions in universities and, as such, have to strive and work hard to advance further.

There are three methods for how women leaders in this study perceived as conducive to attain high-ranking positions. The first method is that, often, a woman gets the chance to be appointed because her skill set and qualifications are indispensable to the position. The second is that the senior administrators provided the female academician or administrator access to a leadership position in response to the hard work and going over and above the call of duty in order to reward the female leader's hard work, exceptional service and devotion to the institution. Lastly, top management had no qualified male candidate and had to appoint a woman to a leadership position instead. Indeed, 25% of the participants attributed their appointment to leadership positions to the fact that they were a "last resort" because the university's administration had no better options among their male colleagues.

Based on the results of the study one can conclude that there are two key reasons for having few women leaders in high-ranking positions in universities. The first reason is women have not set attaining a leadership position as a career goal unlike their male counterparts. It was evident from the women's journeys that their career paths significantly differed from that of their male counterparts. As soon as men begin their careers in academia, they set their eyes on a leadership position. Accordingly, they draw their career paths and focus on finding the resources

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needed to overcome the obstacles in their paths. Women, on the other hand, do not set assuming leadership positions as an integral goal in their career paths, and seem to be overall lacking the sense of entitlement for advancement into a leadership position that their experienced accomplished counterpart have. Coupled with the existing stereotypes about women abilities to assume this role and the existing structural and normative constraints, women are left with no choice but to work above and beyond the call of duty and toil at least twice as hard as their male colleagues (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Al-Lamky, 2006; Nguyen, 2012; Pyke, 2013). Women have to work hard to earn a sense of entitlement to hold a leadership position, and to convince those in senior leadership positions to sponsor them and facilitate their advancement and access to higher rank leadership positions. Often, not until women find a sponsor to get them their first leadership do women start purposefully working towards acquiring higher leadership positions and set the goal to become visible and get promoted. Unfortunately, and based on the findings of this study, even after assuming their leadership positions, women have to continue to work hard because they continuously need to defend their right to hold these positions in the face of uncooperative colleagues.

The second explanation behind why there are a few women leaders in high-ranking positions in universities, might be related to the fact that women do not receive formal leadership training to guide them to perform their leadership duties (Acker, 2014; Cahill et al., 2015; Kehm, 2015; Marshall, 2010; Morley et al., 2016). The findings in this study revealed that there are no inductions or mentoring programs in place in the institution and that the ascent into these positions seem to be a result of individual initiatives at best. The views on the salience of receiving leadership training were mixed. There was a prevalence of the view that leadership training especially for assuming high ranking leadership position is not significant. Many women

leaders still hold the belief that formal leadership training cannot transform an individual to a leader as they believed people cannot be taught to be leaders. On the other hand, some women leaders reported that they did receive a form of formal leadership training and greatly benefited from it. Therefore, this discrepancy implies that both the norms and practice that leadership preparation need to be part and parcel of the process of preparing and supporting potential women leaders in their career advancement towards holding a leadership position is still not established in the case university. Until receiving leadership training becomes formally adopted as a criterion for appointment to leadership positions, the path of women will remain highly dependent on networking with the right person in a power position, or working extra hard hoping for the circumstances to align for them to be offered a leadership position.

The above challenges are hard to overcome because they are rooted in societal norms and a belief system that still did not view leadership as a natural career path for women. As such, women striving to assume leadership positions remain disadvantaged as they have to tackle the challenges of assuming a leadership position in a society that rarely provides the adequate preparation or support for its women leaders (Karami-Akkary, 2013).

Researcher's Reflection

I chose to conduct a research study about women because, being a female myself, I know, from my experience, that this group of individuals does not have equal opportunities as their male counterparts. At the beginning of this study, I thought that I was adopting the feminist perspective. However, while reviewing the available literature, I realized that there are two facets to the feminist perspective: the first is obtaining equal rights among individuals which is labelled as reformed feminism while the second is revolutionary feminism which is transforming the

system to eliminate oppression that includes patriarchy and sexism against the less powerful and minority groups such as women. I believe that in order to achieve the latter, the former perspective should first be obtained which is providing equal rights and opportunities for all because it is the first step in changing the whole system that includes the societal values, beliefs, norms, behaviors, and mindset. Accordingly, I chose to contribute actively to this transformation, through undertaking two strategies: the first is to actively participate in this field of research and second to affiliate myself with feminist groups and activists.

I will implement the first strategy by adopting the action research approach as an Arab feminist scholar. In utilizing this approach, not only will I be able to further explore the available literature, collect data from the primary sources, and present the findings to the figures of authority, I will be to take action to help the Arab women, specifically the Lebanese, achieve their equal rights. As for implementing the second strategy, I will be seeking to become a member in feminist groups to create and implement initiatives that will assist Lebanese and Arab women to obtain their equal rights.

Recommendations

The research study at hand concluded by explaining that despite the few women leaders in high-ranking positions in the university, women are mainly appointed to low and middle-level leadership positions. This underrepresentation is due to three reasons. The first explanation is women do not set attaining a high-ranking position as a career goal and as such have a different career path than men. The career paths of women leaders seem to resemble an obstacle course that few purposeful venture to brace. The second reason for this underrepresentation is because women leaders do not receive formal leadership training. In a context that still consider

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leadership to be an innate skill (Karami-Akkary, 2014), where leadership training is still a luxury rather than a necessity, and where a sink or swim mentality still dominates organizational cultures much remains to be done to support women beat the odds and break the glass ceiling. The third and last reason is women leaders face significant obstacles to attain and retain high-ranking positions. In a system still dominated by gender stereotyped where women aspirations for advancement to higher leadership roles is rarely embraced or supported, women are working extra hard to demonstrate that they are as equipped for leadership roles as their male counterparts. The following section presents the recommendations for practice and further research.

Practical Recommendations

According to the available international literature and the study at hand, in order to increase women's representation in high-ranking leadership positions in the university, it is advised for the senior administration to implement the four following strategies. The first method is to revise and improve the policies and procedures pertaining to recruiting and promoting women. The second method is to provide formal leadership training to women leaders by creating leadership development and mentorship programs. The third method is to provide women leaders with institutional support. Finally, the last method is to create local professional networks for women leaders and to assist them in becoming members of international networks. These four strategies are discussed below.

The first strategy needed to appoint and promote more women to high-ranking leadership positions in the university includes revising and improving policies and procedures related to hiring and promoting leaders. The rules and regulations for appointing leaders need to be

amended for two reasons. The first reason is to counteract the subtle gender discrimination in appointing women to leadership positions in order to create equal opportunities for both genders. The research study of Afiouni and Karam (2017) stated that one of the reasons for not hiring women, especially those who are in the childbearing age, is because the institution has to bear the costs of their maternity leave. Unless, proactive policy initiatives are enacted to eliminate this bias, women will still have an obstacle-filled career path to travel. If these policies are revised, women should not need to work harder than their male colleagues nor assume significant additional responsibilities and duties to get promoted and become more visible. Additionally, women should not need sponsorship to gain access to an all-male domain. As such, following clear processes when it comes to recruitment and promotion and encouraging a wide spectrum of women to seek leadership positions is essential to offer equal opportunities to all qualified professionals. It is also necessary to revise policies and procedures because women's career paths differ than men. This difference is attributed to women having a discontinuous career path because they do not progress from one advancement to the other and have to stop and resume their careers depending on their personal circumstances (Gersick & Kram, 2002; Hertneky, 2012; Karami-Akkary, 2012).

In addition, the promotion guidelines need to be to altered because the criteria have been set by men based on men's experiences (Bailyn, 2003). Being promoted is a form of advancement. Therefore, policies and procedures should be improved in order to take into consideration women's circumstances and experiences. It seems that the university's senior administration has begun to take action regarding the gender discrimination and sexual harassment cases as they have recently hired a Title IX Coordinator who handles these issues. Moreover, the President has assigned a working group of faculty members and administrators to

provide advice on how to best create an equitable environment without harassments and discriminations.

The second strategy that is recommended is for the university's top management to provide formal leadership training, specifically leadership development and mentoring programs for women leaders before they assume their positions. This training is needed because the available studies and the study at hand revealed the importance of women leaders receiving formal training. Indeed, the aim of the training would be to provide women leaders with the technical knowledge and skills required for the position in addition to the skills needed to be a leader (Airini et al., 2011; Hannum et al., 2015).

When developing leadership development programs, it is suggested to adopt Michael Fullan's (2009) "Whole-System Reform", which states that leadership development programs should have three integral components. The first component is "job-embedded" which entails "supporting individual leaders in real, on-the-job settings" (Fullan, 2009, p. 45). This component can be achieved by assigning mentors to the women leaders. The second constituent is the "organization-embedded" component which addresses reforming the organization including its structure, policies, and procedures. In this research study's context, this component includes revising and improving the policies and procedures pertaining to appointing and promoting the women leaders. The last constituent or the "system-embedded" component includes attempting to reform leadership in education. In this setting, the system-embedded component would be a long-term goal because it would require a change in the society's mindset to accept the equal representation of women to men leaders in high-ranking positions in higher education institutions.

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It is beneficial for women leaders to attend leadership development programs. As such, women leaders would be able to acquire new skills and learn how to lead in an effective manner (Rolle, 2013). For example, The Women's Leadership Forum at Harvard University teaches women leaders how to better lead based on their unique contexts, how to increase their self-confidence, and to identify their strengths and weakness. Also, this leadership forum teaches women the necessary leadership skills, such as negotiation and decision-making skills and exposes them to the experiences of successful women leaders to learn how they can overcome their challenges.

Equally important to attending leadership development programs is to have mentorship programs for women. It is important for females, who are already in high-ranking positions, to mentor women who are aspiring or have been newly appointed to a leadership position. This mentor-mentee relationship is necessary because these mentors will also act as role models as they have already paved the road for females in leadership positions. In addition, having female role models in leadership positions is imperative because they would help weaken the stereotypes and misconceptions about female leaders (Hannum et al., 2015). Finally, this mentorship program could foster solidarity between women leaders in different positions, which is missing and very much needed in the university.

The third recommended strategy is for the university's senior administration to provide institutional support for women by providing supportive conditions for these leaders to exercise their leadership. This support would assist women in overcoming the challenges they face in working in difficult conditions. An example of institutional support includes flexible working hours to accommodate the personal lives of the women leaders. Another example is to distribute the teaching and service duties equally among male and female academicians to ensure a fair

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working load. One more example of an institutional support is to devise a system to fairly allocate resources among male and female academic leaders, which would in turn assist them to advance in their careers.

Lastly, the fourth strategy that is recommended is for the university's top management to create local professional networks for women and to assist female leaders to become members in international networks. Having a network of connections either locally or internationally is significant for women because they would 1) establish connections with fellow colleagues, 2) receive support from each other, and 3) have role models (Harris & Leberman, 2012). The advantage of a woman leader becoming a member of an international network is staying up-to-date in all of the leadership aspects in addition to the new trends and discoveries in her field.

Recommendations for Further Research

One of the main reasons this research study has been conducted is to cover the knowledge gap in the Arab region by exploring the women leaders' journeys, to further explain the challenges women face, to describe the external factors that facilitated women's ascension, and to state that society and politics are inevitable impeding factors in leadership positions in higher education institutions in Lebanon. This study fills a gap both in the international and local knowledge base about women's advancement to high ranking leadership positions in universities.

Although the research study at hand attempted to cover the gap in the Lebanese knowledge base about the journeys of these women and investigated the experience and in turn the challenges and facilitators of women leaders within an educational institution, there is still a need to have further research studies that explore the experiences of women leaders. Scholars

such as Morley (2005 a) agree that there is an acute need for further research to enrich the knowledge base, especially in developing countries. In addition, according to Lebanese researchers (Afiouni & Karam, 2014; Jamali et al., 2005), further studies are needed to explore the challenges and facilitators women leaders experience.

Further research is needed for several reasons: the findings of this study cannot be generalized as it is a case-study. It is imperative to have more studies that explore the experiences of women leaders, both academics and administrators, who made it despite all the challenges that they faced. It would also be interesting to explore the reasons why senior administrators decide to sponsor the women leaders, or whether decision-makers and the women leaders share similar views on the nature of the barriers they face. Additionally, it would be enriching to discover what the general and gender-specific challenges are and which facilitators leaders experience in high education institutions.

It is also imperative to have more women in high-ranking leadership positions in a university because they would enrich the leadership team and foster diversity since they are found to advance the organization's leadership spectrum with collaborative and collegial leadership approaches (Lambert & Gardner, 2009). Women are discovering how to advance and succeed in positions of leadership; however, they still require help from researchers and scholars to uncover further challenges, provide assistance on how to overcome the obstacles, describe the facilitators, and explain the deliberate actions that women can undertake to have more women and in higher leadership ranks. As such more action research studies can advance the contextually grounded knowledge base on the experiences of women leaders and can advance policy recommendations and /or plans for actions to overcome the existing challenges.

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APPENDIX A

EMAIL TO INVITE WOMEN LEADERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

<u>Invitation to Participate in a Research Study</u>

This notice is for an AUB-IRB Approved Research Study

for <u>Dr. Rima Karami Akkary</u> at AUB.

(ra10@aub.edu.lb)

It is not an Official Message from AUB

I am inviting you to participate in a research study, which is titled "Women Becoming Leaders: The Case of Lebanese Women in Higher Education", that explores the experiences and perspectives of Lebanese women educational leaders on the external factors that positively and negatively influenced them and their personal endeavors to attain formal leadership positions in higher education institutions.

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire with demographic information and participate in an individual interview to describe your journey in attaining a formal leadership position. In addition, you are requested to participate in a focus group interview to member-check the data obtained.

You are invited because we are targeting women in formal leadership academic and administrative positions in higher education institutions.

The estimated time to complete this survey is approximately 5 minutes whereas the individual and focus group interviews will almost be 60 and 75 minutes respectively.

The research will be conducted in the women leaders' offices and in conference rooms on campus.

Please read the consent form and consider whether you want to be involved in the study.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the investigator/research team (Dr. Rima Karami Akkary at 01-350000 ext. 3058 or by email: ra10@aub.edu.lb or Mrs. Fida Alameddine at 70-128767 or by email: fma37@mail.aub.edu).

APPENDIX B

WOMAN LEADER'S BACKGROUND FORM

Prior to beginning the interview, I will introduce myself and the purpose for conducting this research study. Then, I will kindly ask the participant to answer the below questions because they will provide me with socio-demographic information to enable me to deduce statistical data. I will inform the woman leader that the information she will provide will remain confidential.

Age:

Position:

Number of Years in Current Position:

Previous Position:

Number of Years in Previous Position:

Highest Degree Obtained:

University:

Have you received formal training before obtaining your current position?

☐   ☐
Yes   No

If yes, please describe the formal training activity(ies): _____

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR WOMEN LEADERS

After filling the form, I will inform the participant that the duration of the interview will be between 60 and 75 minutes. The interview questions will be the following.

1.   Based on your lived experience, what was the process for you to obtain this formal leadership position in the university? Did you seek it?

Possible probes: How did you learn about this position? Did you apply on your own or did a colleague/mentor/relative encourage you to apply? Was this a competitive position?

2.   What were the external factors/situations that hindered your ascension to the formal leadership position? (Examples)

Possible probe: Suppose that I want to pursue a similar leadership position in the university, what are the situations that you would warn me of?

3.   What were the external factors/situations that facilitated your ascension to the high-ranking position? (Examples)

Possible probe: Looking back at your experience, what were the things that assisted you to obtain this position?

4.   What were the deliberate actions that you undertook to obtain this formal leadership position? Did you pursue any formal training? What motivated you to attain a high-ranking position in the university? (Examples)

Possible probes: Assuming that this formal leadership position was a career goal for you, how did you achieve it? What did you do to accomplish this goal?

APPENDIX D

MEMBER CHECKING INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Opening statement: The aim of this interview is to validate the data obtained. This is a short interview because its duration is between 10 to 20 minutes. I will first present to you the themes that have emerged from my data analysis. I would like to know if you would like to add any missing idea/topic and to clarify any misconception(s). Then I would appreciate your feedback concerning these themes and if you would like to comment in general about your personal journey to reaching and holding a leadership position.

Possible probes: Do you have anything to add to this category/theme? Do you agree with the title? Did I clearly capture the idea? Is it clearly presented?

Closing question: After discussing the analyzed categories, would you like to add anything?

APPENDIX E

EXCERPT FROM RESEARCHER'S JOURNAL

This section will show how the researcher used the strategies in the grounded-theory methodology to report and analyze the research study's findings. An example of how a theme emerged and was adopted is presented below.

Converting the Raw Data to Text

The majority (15 out of 20) of the participants gave the researcher consent to audio-tape the interviews. As for the remaining 5 women leaders, they requested that the researcher takes notes during the interviews. Accordingly, the raw data comprised of 15 audio files and 5 hand-written notes. Therefore, the researcher transcribed the 15 audio files and typed the notes. Below is an example of each raw data.

Transcribed Interview

"No I mean for these leadership no formal training. 'Ma fi akid la2 ma fi' formal anything but I think for academia it is like that. At educational institutions 'bi jibo 2istez w 3imil' good research 'bi2oulo 3mol' administrator. 'Yi3ni' I don't think it is peculiar to women. Be careful about it. I don't think anybody gets formal training. Academicians they don't have …it's a funny business because then you know they have budgets and all of these things but then nobody trains you to do these things. 'Hala2' you get some training of course from experience, you know I got training as director for X 'masalan'. Uh... in doing some management uh... leading a team. It's a bit ... it's all you know learned on the job. Mm. So, the more of these opportunities you have the more you will be trained to assume, if you happen to land you know in a much higher position. Having these earlier experiences will be invaluable. I would say for example that my year as Y was invaluable for me for this. Again, I had to learn things on the job. Mm. Eh some people have ... are more natural at having some administrative skills. Some people have to struggle much more to gain them and leadership is not only about management. Mm. So, there is also this distinction, you there is management and knowing how to understand budgets and you know, but then leadership is a different level altogether. It is how to be able to communicate with the team, with the faculty. It is also learning how to motivate them, also having a vision about you know where is the direction of where this is happening, where this is going. But also managing to also form teams that are that can work together and move things forward together. So, no formal training but a lot of training you know through the various um administrative positions that I have had as chair and director of X, and as Y. It is really 3 different positions and they taught me different things.

[So, you got on the job, your experience on the job?]

Yes, but I don't think it is unique to me or to women or to ... it is the nature of the academy. They want somebody who is an academic, who is a very top researcher and these people you know don't have an MBA and don't, they have not worked in companies and have not really supervised budgets."

Researcher's Notes

Answers to Number 1:

- Committed time to serve the institution

- Served on different committees such as admissions, career, student services, curriculum, research and faculty research, graduate, and strategic

- "never said no to any service"

- "always happy to do it (serve)"

- Because I have served the institution, I was visible to the administration

- I'm heavily involved in student life

- Involvement in student advising

- I have the largest number of student advisers "thousand something"

- I have served my department as a chairperson for 3 years, faculty, and university

- You deliver – you are passionate

- [Stressed the importance of visibility]

- There are many gaps in the students' life such as advising, registration, career service, enrollment, and special needs

- My aim is to improve students' life experience at AUB

- Before becoming the chair of the X unit, I was part of the taskforce committee for 3 years

- It took 3 years for this position to materialize (February 2009 – October 2012)

- As chair of the X, I had to convince, put in a lot of effort and try to have or create positive change

- I became the Y because during the last administration I was the chair of the X; so, for the president and provost to ensure continuity they appointed me as Y

- As Y, my job is to improve students' life such as the special needs, advising, and registration

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- In addition, my task is to unify or consolidate the scholarships (USAID, Mastercard & MEPI), under the provost

Coding the Text to Become Concepts

The researcher printed the 20 typed interviews and performed line-by-line coding. For each line, the researcher attempted to write a code that describes the action that occurred (Charmaz, 2006). The pictures below depict how the researcher used line-by-line coding on the interviews presented above.

M. = her way in speaking to ensure that I understood (instead of saying ok)

no training in academia

No I mean for these leadership no formal training. Ma fi akid la2 ma fi formal anything but I think for academia it is like that. At educational institutions bi jibo 2istez w 3imil good research bi2oulo 3mol administrator. Yi3ni I don't think it is peculiar to women. Be careful about it. I don't think anybody gets formal training. Academicians they don't have ..it's a funny business because then you know they have budgets and all of these things but then nobody trains you to do these things. Hala2 you get some

partial training but on the job

training of course from experience, you know I got training as director for ⬛ masalan. Uh.. in doing some management uh.. leading a team. It's a bit .. it's all you know learned on the job. M. So the more

having prior experiences in leadership positions

of these opportunities you have the more you will be trained to assume, if you happen to land you know in a much higher position. Having these earlier experiences will be invaluable. I would say for example that my year as interim associate provost was invaluable for me for this. Again I had to learn things on the job m. eh some people have .. are more natural at having some administrative skills. Some people have to struggle much more to gain them and leadership is not only about management. M. so there is

explaining the # btw manager & leader

also this distinction, you there is management and knowing how to understand budgets and you know, but then leadership is a different level altogether. It is how to be able to communicate with the team, with the faculty. It is also learning how to motivate them, also having a vision about you know where is the direction of where this is happening, where this is going. But also managing to also form teams that are that can work together and move things forward together. So no formal training but a lot of training you know through the various um administrative positions that I have had as chair and director of ⬛, and interim associate provost. It is really 3 different positions and they taught me different things.

"So you got on the job, your experience on the job"

Yes, but I don't think it is unique to me or to women or to .. it is the nature of the academy. They want somebody who is an academic, who is a very top researcher and these people you know don't have an MBA and don't they have not worked in companies and have not really supervised budgets.

"But they sacrifice, correct, as a researcher you are now sacrificing your research"

Sa7. Yes sacrifice is a choice M. it is a choice to do that. It is a funny thing you know. It is it is uhh. Faculty members are very ambivalent about these positions "ok" because they think that research is the most important thing one can do. And so when you become an administrator of choice, they are not sure how to, so on the one hand of course you have power and all of that but basically in their minds the minute you step up as administrator you have lost 20% of your IQ. You know what I'm saying (laughing kind of). This is what they think yi3ni (laughing kind of) in some way but you don't have to quote me directly on this. But the idea being that ah you will now be doing the less valuable thing. You know which is management and it depends on the people. So, so it is a funny business you know being in management in an academic institution because of this because of course technically you are not really the boss of anyone. Yi3ni all of this, I have 200 full-time faculty members I mean they are a handful, they are all Phds. It is very peculiar to be in an institution of higher education and to be in management there. Hala2 the are some, let me think, for example the COO our Chief Operating Officer. Who is a nice and interesting person to interview if you want by the way, "he is a male". Eh I know but just you know maybe you can give I mean ask him questions about his you know his experience uh I about you know because he was at UPenn he has a lot actually administrative experience as an administrator he doesn't come from the academy he is an administrator and maybe we can see if you can find you know some questions and tell him that you are doing this research and whether in his experience if he finds that women administrators, you know, have different perspectives and different experiences because he is also very good at expressing himself about these things. I think he will give you invaluable. You know he is a good friend so I can introduce you to him "Sure that would be great". Ismo Ramin Sadehi

Answer to # 1

serving the institution by being a member in + committees

- Committed time to serve the institution

- Served on different committees such as admissions, career, student services, curriculum, research and faculty research, graduate, and strategic

- "never said no to any service"

not saying no to service

- "always happy to do it (serve)"

serving caused me to be visible to the administration

- Because I have served the institution, I was visible to the administration

involving myself in student's life

- I'm heavily involved in student life

- Involvement in student advising

- I have the largest number of student advisers "thousand something"

- I have served my department as a chairperson for 3 years, faculty, and university — *add to serving*

delivering your work

- You deliver – you are passionate

being passionate about your work

- Stresses the importance of visibility

- There are many gaps in the students' life such as advising, registration, career service, enrollment, and special needs

- My aim is to improve students' life experience at AUB — *add to serving*

holding a "temporary" leadership position before advancing

- Before becoming the chair of ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ (▬▬▬), I was part of the taskforce committee for 3 years

- It took 3 years for this position to materialize (February 2009 – October 2012)

requires effort - to succeed in position

appointed to - ensure continuity

Stressing on students' experience → 1) love what she is doing 2) means to her

Typed text (with parts redacted/blacked out):

- As chair of the ████, I had to convince, put in a lot of effort and try to have or create positive change

- I became the ████████████ because during the last administration I was the chair of ████████, so for the president and provost to ensure continuity they appointed me as the ████████████

- As the ████████████, my job is to improve students' life such as the special needs, advising, and registration

In addition, my task is to unify or consolidate the scholarships (USAID, Mastercard & MEPI), under the provost

████████████ change but it is slow for example:

Concepts that Emerged

The codes were then categorized under the research questions. Below is an example of how the codes were used to answer the first research question in this study.

Research Question	Coding - Round 1	Participant
How did you reach where you are today / What was the process for you to get where you are today	holding a "temporary" leadership position before taking a permanent one - having prior leadership positions	AH1 - AH3 - AH7 - MH2 - MH3
	had a previous position at AUB	MM1
	being director of X	AM4
	somehow had training by being the chair in the Fall	AM5

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began at Y	MM2
being in a previous position with similar work	AH4

Using the Constant Comparison Analysis on Concepts to deduce the Themes

The aforementioned concepts were compared with each other. Also, the concepts' properties were identified from the researcher's perspective which included her analysis as well that of the participants' which is "abstracted from the language of the research situation" (Glaser, 1967, p. 107). The theme that emerged from using the constant comparison analysis was women leaders had previous experience in leadership positions which aided their appointment to their current positions.

Coding - Round 2	Participant
having previous leadership positions	AH1 - AH3 - AH7 – AH4 - MH2 - MH3
having a previous position at the institution	AM4 – AM5 - MM1 - MM2

The subtheme of having prior experience in working at the institution was also included in this theme for two reasons. First, the participants in middle-level positions could not have previously held higher leadership positions in the same university. Second, according to these women leaders, their prior experience in working in the institution was an integral factor for them to be appointed to their current positions. Therefore, the researcher had to include this finding since the aim of the research study is to explore in-depth the lives of women leaders. Additionally, when presenting this theme as a finding, the researcher did not include AM4 and AM5 in the count but included their experiences in the narrative. This is because AM4 is simultaneously holding 2 leadership positions. For almost a year, she was holding one position and then she was nominated and appointed to hold a second. As for AM5, her previous position was temporary which prompted the researcher to not include her in the "count".

Member-Checking and Comparing with the Literature to Present the Adopted Themes

To verify the themes that emerged, the researcher first member-checked the themes by conducting individual interviews with the participants. During these interviews, the researcher was taking notes. The table below depicts a participant's comment during the member-checking interview.

Participant	Theme	Quote
AH1	Previous Leadership Experience	"you need to have the experience - you can't be a leader the first day you start at the institution"

Second, the researcher compared the theme that emerged with the literature reviewed. The table below shows that women leaders in different contexts perceive having previous experience in leadership positions as one of the factors that aided their appointment to their current positions.

Theme	Literature Reviewed
Previous Experience in Leadership	Acker, 2014; Johnsrud, 1991; Madsen, 2007 – Canada & U.S.

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