SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION, FEMALE SAUDI ACADEMIC LEADERS, AND THE GLASS CEILING: MOVING FROM GUARDIANSHIP TO GOVERNANCE

DR. HANAN MUHAYA MOHAMED ALENAZY

Organisational Leadership In Higher Educational Sector, Educational Management Department, Shaqra University
E-mail: Hanan.m@su.edu.sa

Abstract - This qualitative multi-case study explores the barriers manifested by perceptions of the "glass ceiling" that Saudi female academic leaders face in their progression toward and within governance positions in Saudi public universities. Taking place amidst great social change in the Kingdom, this study is theoretically underpinned by feminist standpoint theory in order to foreground the voices and life narratives of such women. Data are based on semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 20 purposively sampled female faculty members from different faculty ranks in eight public universities in Saudi Arabia. The study examines how the leaders frame specific obstacles, strategically make their way through the changing landscape of the Kingdom, and how they interpret the convergence of these issues within their involvement in shaping the direction of universities. The results will afford evidence to inform efforts to develop more inclusive leadership processes in Saudi Arabian higher education.

Rationale:
In addressing challenges to the advancement of Saudi female academics to leadership positions in public universities in the Kingdom in terms of changes with reference to women, all aspects of this article's context, the promotion of Saudi women academics, are yet to be fully understood in the voices of the women themselves. It is valuable to understand how these leaders think and speak of the barriers they are facing to more effectively think about solving the "glass ceiling" issue in the national context of Lichtenthal colloquy 207. This qualitative study, underpinned by a feminist standpoint frame of reference for understanding women's experiences, aims to address this gap by examining the perceptions of female academic leaders in Saudi Arabia regarding the obstacles to their career advancement in the light of the changing socio-political environment in the Kingdom. Results can be utilized in creating responsive knowledge for policymakers and university leadership in Saudi Arabia seeking to encourage more variation of inclusive leadership in Saudi Arabia.

Aims:
This study aims to investigate the glass ceiling features experienced as narrated by female academic leaders at Saudi public universities while they are both working their way toward, and within strategic administrative and governance positions within the context of a society which is changing as elementally as that in Saudi Arabia.

Objectives:
To explore the perspectives of Saudi women academic leaders on the unique challenges (including the manifestation of the "glass ceiling") that they face in gaining access to opportunities for leadership and governance to higher positions in leadership roles in public universities in Saudi Arabia, within the context of a society in the midst of a key transformative period in its history.
To identify the primary "glass ceiling" barriers and value systems that female Saudi academic leaders experience and perceive in advancement in leadership in the higher-education governance structure in Saudi Arabia.

Research Question:
How do Saudi female academic leaders perceive and describe the key obstacles, including manifestations of the "glass ceiling," that they encounter in their progression toward leadership and governance roles within Saudi public universities, considering the context of rapid and significant societal change?