

# **OBSTACLES FACING ACADEMIC FEMALE LEADERS AT JORDANIAN UNIVERSITIES FROM FACULTY MEMBERS PERCEPTION AND WAYS TO OVERCOME**

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### **Abstract**

The study sought to identify, from the perspective of faculty members, the obstacles that female academic leaders face in Jordanian universities, as well as ways to overcome them. The study's findings revealed that the obstacles confronting female academic leaders in Jordanian universities were, to a large extent, and with a mean of (3.80), and that there were no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $= 0.05$ ) for the study sample members' estimates of the obstacles confronting them. Female's academic leaders attributed their success to study variables. The study made several recommendations, including raising societal awareness about the role of Jordanian female in development, particularly given Jordan's growing female population, and providing a work environment that is compatible with female's family roles and responsibilities to their children and husbands.

**Keywords:** Female Academic Leaders, Gender Equality, Obstacles, Jordan

### **INTRODUCTION**

The conversation regarding how gender inequality has been addressed in higher education in Jourdan in universities is important for two basic reasons. First, gender binary systems are being politically challenged like never before by the rights of gender minorities, disrupting hegemonic gender patterns even while males educators continue to hold the majority of power in academia. However, it is important to not undervalue the fundamental gendered disparities

that come from the distinct normative roles that are assigned to men and women. Despite the fact that the notion of a single dominating form of masculinity is under growing scrutiny. (El Kharouf and Nour, 2019)

The presence of females, their empowerment, and the attainment of their rights in positions of leadership has become a topic of discussion in many fields, including higher education. Despite advances in education and higher education, female's roles in academic leadership continue to fall short of expectations. Female can play an important role in the progress and advancement of society if the opportunity arises.

Female's developmental participation is a prerequisite for achieving comprehensive development; thus, cultural barriers to female's development must be removed, as must awareness and a radical shift in prevailing concepts about female, including their roles, stereotypes, manifestations of discrimination against them, equality, and gender issues in general (Abu Ayyash, 2006). Men believe that female lack the leadership qualities required to perform leadership roles, but studies show that female can benefit from a set of qualities that allow them to practice academic leadership in an appropriate environment of participation, sympathy and creativity, understanding female's needs, delegation, giving powers, communicating, and forming relationships with others (Suwaidan and Bashraheel, 2003).

Al-Fassi (2009) listed several barriers to female leadership, including the following:

- 1) How society perceives female, their lack of male guardians, and their inability to provide for themselves.
- 2) The social reality of the few jobs that female are required to take on in order to avoid socializing with men and to consider her family situation if she is a mother and a wife.
- 3) Some female employees favor routine positions, part-time work, and less challenging career paths.

### **Female's leadership characteristics:**

Al-Rawashdeh and Al-Arab (2016) identified a set of qualities that female can use to exercise leadership, including:

- Participation: Female now constitute more than half of society, and they play an important role in all doctrinal and intellectual changes. Counseling in the decision-making process and advice and referral are examples of participation.
- Empathy is the feeling of compassion and appreciation for the needs and circumstances of others. This trait assists female in developing genuine and honest relationships, which cause others to love her and work with her toward shared objective.
- Creativity: Studies show that female is 25% more creative than men, allowing them to find novel solutions and contribute ideas that help institutions change their ways of working in response to the world's rapid changes. Understanding female's needs: Female are better than men at understanding female's needs.

- Delegating and delegating power: Female's use of force at work is thinner than men's, and they are more than men's in delegating power and delegating decision-making authority, which makes the team enthusiastic and cohesive.
- Far-sightedness: Because female is more perceptive of all information than men, they are often farther-sighted.
- Communication: Female are more willing to engage in dialogue than men in similar circumstances, and communication and dialogue are regarded as the foundation for managing work, and female are more open in discussing their feelings and convictions, as well as their willingness to engage in dialogue and reach solutions to problems.
- Her willingness to sacrifice: Female's willingness to sacrifice stems from their ability to bear pain, which extends beyond the material to the moral sphere.( Al-Rawashdeh and Al-Arab,2016)

### **Female's advancement in leadership positions:**

According to Ghiath 2013 several educational, social, economic, and media factors aided female's advancement to positions of leadership, including:

Education for girls is being expanded in Arab societies. Female's motivation to learn because it is the only way to eliminate social marginalization.

Parental attitudes toward their daughters pursuing professional and leadership positions.

- Maintaining a decent standard of living, which encourages female to take on leadership roles.
- Arab countries making political decisions to encourage female to hold positions of leadership. Ghiath, 2013

### **The problem of study and its questions**

Despite the media's emphasis on this issue and the need for gender equality in general and in the matter of sharing roles positions in universities, the issue of female's assumption of academic leadership in higher education in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has not received enough attention from researchers and scholars in the educational field.

The number of female academic staff members and the number of female academics in leadership positions in higher education institutions across the Arab world, and in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in particular, differ significantly. This difference is the result of numerous barriers that female academics must overcome in order to advance to positions of leadership.

The source of this research to shed light on the challenges faced by female academic leaders in Jordanian universities and suggest solutions from the perspective of faculty members by responding to the following questions:

- 1) What are the obstacles facing female academic leaders in Jordanian universities from the point of view of faculty members?
- 2) Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between the average responses of the study sample members due to the variables (college, academic rank, administrative position)?
- 3) What are the ways to overcome the obstacles facing female academic leaders in Jordanian universities from their point of view?

### **The significance of study:**

The study's significance is as follows:

This study provides data and information on the reality of female leaders in Jordanian universities for those interested in academic affairs in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

- The study extends both the advancement of female who lack the necessary leadership skills and the development of female leaders in Jordanian universities.
- This study serves as a springboard for researchers to conduct additional research on female academic leaders.

### **Objectives of the study:**

- Determining the challenges faced by female academic administrators in Jordanian universities.
- Determining the degree of variation in the study sample participants' responses to the questions about the challenges faced by female academic leaders in Jordanian universities.
- Finding solutions to the challenges Jordanian academic leaders face in its universities.

### **Definition of Terms:**

- 1) Female academic leaders are female who hold a position of leadership or are at the center of academic decision-making, and what this entails in terms of developing policies and strategies that will direct the efforts of university employees (Eagly and Carli 2003)
- 2) Female academics in Jordanian universities who hold leadership positions such as dean, deputy dean, and department head are examples of procedural female leaders.
- 3) Obstacles: Issues that prevent female in academic institutions from exercising their leadership roles, whether at the personal or organizational level.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The researchers came up with the following arrangement and presentation of earlier studies relevant to the subject of the study, which were presented in descending order:

The 2019 study by Al-Somali and Al-Jafri sought to identify the most typical obstacles academic female face in their pursuit of leadership positions in the public higher education sector. The researchers collected data from a sample of (130) leaders using the descriptive analytical method and a questionnaire. According to the study's findings, female leaders face significant organizational challenges, the most significant of which are: poor information sharing between female's departments. Next come significant personal challenges, which are represented by the capacity to balance personal and professional obligations and make decisions regardless of personal feelings. One of the biggest problems Saudi female still have to deal with is the disparity in performance standards between the sexes when it comes to management and leadership abilities.

In her 2019 study, Al-Kaabi sought to understand the challenges and barriers female face in advancing to leadership roles at the University of Baghdad from their perspective. 144 faculty members made up the study sample, and data was gathered using a questionnaire tool. The degree of difficulty rises when it comes to the organizational, scientific, familial, and financial aspects. The organizational barrier is the most notable, and officials believe that female leaders are less capable of making wise decisions than men. The objective of the Tayfour study from 2018 was to assess the administrative empowerment of female academic leaders at the University of Hail and the barriers they faced. The overall level of empowerment barriers is medium, and the college for administrative empowerment of female academic leaders is large.

Abu Siam 2018 conducted a study to identify the barriers that female academic leaders face in Jordanian universities, as well as suggestions for improvement from their perspective. A questionnaire containing 41 items was distributed to them, with the items divided into four categories: social, cultural, administrative, professional, functional, and personal obstacles. Five items came from social cultural obstacles and two items came from self-obstacles to a high degree, and the items that came with a high degree can be classified into two groups, one related to the masculine nature of society's culture and the other related to the conflict between the role of the woman leader on the one hand and her biological and social role on the other, as the findings revealed a statistically significant difference in participation between public and private universities in favor of private universities. It also conducted interviews with (10) female academic leaders, during which the participants presented proposals to overcome the obstacles that female academic leaders face, such as reducing the job and teaching burden on female leaders and establishing clear criteria for selecting academic leaders.

Al Jaradat 2014 conducted research to identify the challenges that female academic leaders face in secondary schools in the Irbid Educational District. The study sample included (187) academic leaders who were chosen at random. Using a questionnaire with 49 items divided into four categories: organizational challenges, personal challenges, social challenges, and material challenges. On the axis of organizational challenges, there are statistically significant

differences in academic level, but no statistically significant differences in years of functional experience. Dunn, Gerlach, and Hyle (2014) conducted a study on their experience as academic leaders on the grounds that academic leadership studies were conducted by men researchers on male leaders, so the theoretical literature came with masculine criteria, and female had to be inspired and evaluated on their basis. This has hampered female's access to leadership positions and contributed to their under-representation in university administration. By conducting a retrospective study of the previous experiences of female academic leaders at various stages of their lives, the study used the systematic retrospective approach to delve into the experiences of (3) female who are American academic leaders. According to the study, the participants' incentives to assume leadership positions were passion for work, a desire to make a difference, commitment, and self-awareness, while the success factors were altruism, love of service, contribution to community service, and building networks and work teams.

Abul-Ela 2014 conducted a proposed strategic study in the College of Education at Taif University to activate the role of Saudi female's leadership in educational decision-making, with the study population consisting of all faculty members at the College of Education at Taif University. The descriptive analytical approach was used in the study, and the results showed that female's leadership participates in an average percentage of educational decision-making at Taif University's College of Education, and there are statistically significant differences in the degree of female's participation in favor of the scientific rank.

Wallace and Marchant 2011 conducted a study on academic female in middle academic leadership in Australian universities. The study found that, despite the stated policy of criminalizing discrimination against female, 172 academic directors from the middle leadership were randomly selected. However, participants complained about discrimination, the patriarchal culture's dominance, a lack of flexibility, a lack of appreciation for their role, and limited opportunities for advancement, and some even questioned whether they should bring a male administrative culture.

Tessens, White, and Web 2011 conducted a survey of female academic leaders at two Australian universities to determine the needs and challenges of female's leadership development. According to the findings of the study, the needs are similar. More than 80% of participants stated that female's leadership development programs may provide knowledge and skills for female leaders to succeed in a challenging work environment, and invited participants to introduce content about people management, political awareness, employment issues, and professional development, as well as one of the preferred methods for development. Professional care, peer networks, accompaniment, and exchange of university visits the difficulties are represented by a heavy academic load, administrative work requirements, and the support of management and colleagues.

## Limitations of the Study

- This study's focus was on the challenges faced by female academic leaders in Jordanian universities.
- Time frame: This research was conducted in the first semester of 2021–2022.
- Human Limit: Only female academic administrators at Jordanian universities were included in this study.
- The place limit: The following Jordanian universities are separated by space: (Jordan, Yarmouk, Balqa Applied, Mutah, Jadara, Applied Sciences)

## Method and Procedures

This section of the study dealt with the methodology of the study, its population, sample, tools, indications of validity and reliability, variables, and statistical methods used to treat the results.

## Approach of Research

The descriptive survey method was used in this study, along with data analysis, to identify the obstacles that women academic leaders face in Jordanian universities, as well as ways to overcome them.

## The population of the study and its sample

The study population consisted of faculty members from Jordanian universities: (The Jordanian University, Yarmouk, Al-Balqa Applied, Mutah, Jadara, and Applied Sciences), with a total of 3718, and a random sample of 428 was chosen to represent the study community, as shown in table 1. The sample was chosen based on the variables of the study.

**Table 1: Shows the Distribution of Sample Members Based on Personal Variables**

Percent	Frequency	Level	Variable
%42	178	femal	gender
%58	250	male	
%100	428	the total	
%7	30	Professor	Academic Position
%21	90	Associate Professor	
%72	308	Assistant Professor	
%100	428	The total	
%2	8	College Dean	Position
%40	172	Head of the section	
%58	248	Member of the faculty	
%100	428	المجموع	

## Instruments of the Study

The descriptive survey method was used in this study, along with data analysis, to identify the obstacles that women academic leaders face in Jordanian universities, as well as ways to overcome them.



## **The Questionnaire**

To achieve the study's objectives, the researchers developed a questionnaire after consulting the theoretical literature and previous studies related to the subject of the study, including the studies of Al-Somali and Al-Jafri 1019, Al-Kaabi 2019, Tayfur 2018, Abu Siam (2018), and locusts (2014), and the tool is distributed over five levels, to a very large degree (and five degrees are given), and ends to a (and only one degree is given)

## **The interview**

The third question, "What are the ways to overcome the obstacles facing female academic leaders in Jordanian universities from their point of view?" was answered by the researcher through interviews with a sample of the study community. Their number grew to 33 female leaders.

## **Validity of the Instruments**

To establish verify content validity instruments, the researchers presented them to a panel of specialized and experienced arbitrators drawn from Jordanian university faculty. Arbitrators' Notes 12 paragraphs were deleted and modified, resulting in a final form of 27 paragraphs distributed across the questionnaire fields. The interview question was presented to the experts to verify the authenticity of the interview content, as they had made no observations about the interview question.

## **Reliability of the Instruments**

The reliability of the instruments was confirmed by the t-retest method, as the study tool was distributed to a sample of 14 from the study population and from outside its sample, then the questionnaire was re-applied again after two weeks and the correlation coefficient was calculated on the two applications. Its value as a whole 0,85

## **Study variables**

The study included the following independent variables: Intermediate independent variables  
Gender has two levels: male and female.

Academic rank and has three levels: Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor.

The Position is separated into three categories: Dean of the Faculty, Head of Department, and Faculty Member.

## **Dependent variable**

Obstacles to female academic leadership in Jordanian universities and strategies for overcoming them

## **Instruments correction method**

The scale was adjusted using a five-point Likert scale (1=very low, 2=low, 3=medium, 4=high, 5=very high). As a result, the scale scores ranged from (34-170) degrees.



## Statistical analysis

To answer the study's questions, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the study sample's responses on the questionnaire items were extracted, and the triple analysis of variance was used, as well as the following statistical criterion related to arithmetic averages.

- From 1.00 to less than 2.33: to a minor extent 2.33 to less than 3.66: moderately
- Between 3.66 and 5.00: To a large extent.

## STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section included a presentation of the study's findings as well as statistical analyses performed to answer and discuss the study's questions. The following are the findings:

The first question is, **"What are the obstacles that female academic leaders face in Jordanian universities from the perspective of faculty members?"**

To answer this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the study sample members' answers for all items of the study instrument and the instrument as a whole were extracted, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: The arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the study sample members' estimates on each tool item and on the tool as a whole are arranged in descending order**

Rating Score	Standard Deviation	SMA	Item	No	Rank
Big	0.44	4.76	A man's failure to accept the idea of a female being responsible for him	8	1
Big	0.54	4.72	The prevalent belief is that men are more capable of accepting responsibility than female.	15	2
Big	0.91	4.60	Lack of interest in developing female as leaders.	17	3
Big	0.77	4.52	Lack of authority and tasks delegated to academic leaders	7	4
Big	0.87	4.48	Female's participation in decision-making is low.	10	5
Big	0.87	4.36	Difficulties dealing with male colleagues and superiors.	14	6
Big	0.63	4.32	Central in academic decision-making	16	7
Big	0.72	4.24	The prevalence of customs and traditions that discourage female from taking on leadership roles.	1	8
Big	0.88	4.12	Parents and husband are opposed to female serving in positions of academic leadership.	5	9
Big	0.81	4.08	The psychological and physical effects that female face limit their ability to lead.	12	10
Big	0.89	4.04	Female's inability to confront and challenge.	6	11
Big	0.91	4.00	Misconceptions about religion and beliefs that limit female's ability to lead academically.	9	12

Rating Score	Standard Deviation	SMA	Item	No	Rank
Big	0.98	3.96	Female academic leaders struggle with time management.	18	13
Big	0.91	3.92	A female leader discovers that leadership is more difficult than she anticipated.	26	14
Big	1.17	3.88	Female prefer that the man be responsible for her rather than the woman.	4	15
Big	0.85	3.84	Female academic leaders in Jordanian universities are not exchanging experiences.	19	16
Big	1.16	3.73	The difficulty of the leading woman balancing administrative responsibilities and family obligations.	25	17
Moderate	0.91	3.65	The difficulty of gaining access to academic female leaders' material and human resources.	2	18
Moderate	0.92	3.60	Female leaders may find it difficult to travel if their jobs require it.	21	19
Moderate	1.39	3.26	Female do not have good relationships that qualify them for positions of leadership.	24	20
Moderate	0.91	3.25	Female's management culture is lacking.	27	21
Moderate	0.93	3.21	Female's lack of confidence in their decision-making abilities when compared to men.	22	22
Moderate	0.95	3.06	Emotional override prevents female leaders from making sound decisions.	20	23
Moderate	0.83	3.04	Many female express dissatisfactions with their workload.	13	24
Moderate	0.84	3.01	The strained relationship between the female leader and her colleagues.	11	25
Moderate	0.83	2.98	In a managerial position, fear of failure	23	26
Moderate	0.91	2.87	Female leaders are afraid of taking on responsibility.	3	27
Big	<b>0.95</b>	<b>3.80</b>	The paragraphs on obstacles as a whole		

According to the preceding table, the arithmetic averages of the study sample members' responses to the items on the obstacles of female's academic leaders ranged between 4.76-2.87, with a high degree of evaluation for all items, the highest of which was for paragraph (8), which states "man does not accept the idea that female are responsible for them." Using the arithmetic mean 4.76, this outcome can be attributed to the fact that Jordanian society still exerts control over its members' beliefs and socialization, which have been influenced by inherited Eastern customs and traditions. In this society, the notion that men are superior to female in terms of leadership skills predominates because men are characterized by a more intelligent mind and reason does not always triumph over emotion as it does with female.

While the lowest for paragraph 3 was "fear of responsibility on the part of female leaders," with a mean of 2.87, this result is attributed to female's academic leaders' confidence in their ability to assume responsibility in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. And that there is nothing to be afraid of taking on responsibility, especially in light of the existing laws and regulations that protect female's rights and dignity while also giving them confidence to move forward in their administrative tasks, confirming the existing models in Jordanian reality that attest to

female's success in many economic, social, and even media fields. This study agrees with the neck study (2009) and the locust study (2014), and the field's arithmetic mean was 3.80 with a significant evaluation degree.

**The second question is: Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level = 0.05 in the estimates of the study sample members on the obstacles confronting female academic leaders based on the variables (gender, academic rank, nature of work)?**

To answer this question, the Independent Samples T-Test was applied to the entire study Instrument based on the gender variable, and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied based on the variables of educational qualification and experience, as shown in tables 3-5.

**Tables 3: The results of applying an Independent Samples T-Test to the instrument as a whole according to the college variable**

Statistical Significance	T	Standard Deviation	Mean	gender
0.54	0.65	0.62	2.61	Male
		0.38	2.74	female

Table No. 3 demonstrates that there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level 0.05 between the sample members' opinions about the obstacles of women's academic leaders based on the college variable, where the value of (T) was 0.65, which is not a statistically significant value.

**Tables 4: A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the entire tool based on the variables of academic rank and administrative position**

Statistical Significance	F	Standard Deviation	Mean	Level	Variable
0.60	0.53	0.48	2.66	Professor	Academic Position
		0.52	2.67	Associate Professor	
		0.17	2.96	Assistant Professor	
0.33	1.15	0.53	2.60	College Dean	Position
		0.50	2.64	Head of the section	
		0.23	2.92	Member of the faculty	

According to Table No. (4), there are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance (0.05) between the sample members' perspectives on the obstacles confronting female academic leaders due to the variables of academic rank and nature of work. (F) Values were (0.53, 1.15) respectively, which are not statistically significant.

This is due to the similarity of the circumstances surrounding female academic leaders in Jordanian universities, as well as the similarity of customs, traditions, and customs, and thus unifying beliefs and perceptions about the obstacles confronting female academic leaders. (2018), and it differed from Abu Al-study. Ala's (2014). The third question is, "From their perspective, what are the ways to overcome the obstacles facing female academic leaders in Jordanian universities?"

To answer this question, thirty-three female academic leaders from Jordanian universities were interviewed, corresponded with, and contacted. The following question was posed: **"From their perspective, what are the ways to overcome the obstacles that female academic leaders face in Jordanian universities?"**

After analyzing the content of the interviews with female academic leaders  $n = 33$ , the study sample members' responses came in descending order based on frequencies and percentages, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Ways for overcoming the barriers that female academic leaders face, ranked in descending order of frequency (n=33)**

percentage	Frequency	Ways to overcome the challenges that female academic leaders face	No
%94	31	Men in higher education institutions are becoming more aware of female's ability to lead.	1
%94	31	Creating clear and equitable foundations for selecting people for positions of leadership.	2
%85	28	Increasing the acceptance of the other among male academic leaders.	3
%76	25	Increasing female participation in administrative decision-making at all levels.	4
%73	24	Training workshops and seminars are being held to educate female on the importance of their leadership roles in society.	5
%64	21	The alignment of female's natural roles and their leadership roles.	6
%55	18	Female do not hesitate to accept leadership positions in universities.	7
%42	14	Creating a foundation and standards for the exchange of experiences between female and men academic leaders.	8
%36	12	Use scientific and educational methods to change society's perception of female in leadership positions.	9
%33	11	Increasing material and moral incentives for female in positions of academic leadership.	10
%27	9	Encouragement of female to participate in decision-making in their field of work.	11
%27	9	Training programs for female workers in leadership positions in higher education institutions	12

According to Table 5, the members of the study sample who were interviewed made several suggestions, the first of which was to raise awareness among men in higher education institutions about the ability of female to play the leadership role, laying clear and fair foundations in choosing people in leadership positions, and this is due to the feeling of female academic leaders. Men's unwillingness to accept that female are their bosses and must submit to prevailing customs and traditions, and that Jordanian society is patriarchal, in addition to a negative view of the recognized bases for choosing leaders, which sometimes favor males over females.

In addition, holding training workshops and seminars to educate female about the importance of their leadership role in society is one way to overcome the obstacles that female academic leaders face. This reflects a lack of training courses for female leaders in which female are made aware of their role in the advancement and advancement of universities, and that their role is no less important than that of men in the same leadership position. The study sample members also indicated that female do not hesitate to accept leadership positions in universities as one of the ways, because fear or shame may push a woman to refuse or hesitate to accept a leadership position if one is offered. As a result, it is necessary to boost female's self-esteem, especially if she has personal and managerial qualifications.

One suggestion is to increase the material and moral incentives for female who take on academic leadership positions. People in general are motivated because it gives them the motivation and initiative to achieve, and it causes them to intensify their efforts to advance and raise the level of the institution in which they work, and female academic leaders, like any other human being, are motivated. It redoubles its efforts and anticipates further progress and advancement at both the personal and institutional levels. Other ways suggested by female's academic leaders in the previous table contribute to some extent to reducing the obstacles faced by female's academic leaders in Jordanian universities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increasing societal awareness of Jordanian female's contributions to development
- fostering a work environment that respects a woman's family role and her obligations to her husband and children.
- directing the media, educational institutions, and community organizations to promote ideals and ideas that support the development of girls and female and their leadership in society.
- Growing interest in training female, focusing training programs on helping them develop their management and leadership skills and keeping them up to date on the latest developments in management science and the administration of justice.

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