

Chapter 82

Bahraini Women Engineers: Factors Influencing Their Career Success Ladder

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the current situation of women engineers in the Kingdom of Bahrain in the public and private sectors, discussing some factors that affect women's access to leading positions, and looking for ways to increase the status of Bahraini women leading in this sector, which will consequently contribute to reinforcing their role in this extremely important sector. The research is approached through a quantitative and qualitative study conducted in the public and private engineering field. Two forms of questionnaires, printed and electronic, were distributed among 120 women engineers; responses were received from 57 of them. In general, the results show that although engineering women are very successful in their career and are effectively contributing to the engineering sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain, many issues need to be addressed in order to support them in reaching higher leading positions.

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INTRODUCTION

Almost every part of our present day involves work done by an engineer: running water, power, World Wide Web, structures, autos, telephones, PCs, TVs — even our mobile applications. Unfortunately, engineering has historically been an inhospitable profession for women.

It is a fact that women have certainly confronted more noteworthy obstructions than men with regard to taking a full part in the economy, wage levels, differences between men and women which endure as pay gaps, unequal open doors for progression, and lopsided portrayals in critical basic leadership. In this particular situation, discriminatory limitation alludes to a boundary which women confront, or have confronted, in the engineering world. A discriminatory limitation keeps women from achieving positions equal to those of men, Pillai et al (2011) stated that “in Bahrain, women experience downward movement in the development ladder due to the glass ceiling effect

Globally, only 14% of the engineering workforce is female. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Institution of Engineering and Technology found that only 7% of the engineering workforce in the United Kingdom were women. Almost half of women that earn a degree in engineering and technology do not work in an engineering role, and those residing in the United Kingdom are less likely to work in the engineering field than those in the European Union as a whole (Engineering UK, 2016).

In the Kingdom of Bahrain, women form 49% of the total population. They are also considered as an important factor of the workforce in industry as they form about 48% and 32% of the total workforce in the public and private sectors respectively. In the engineering sector, Bahraini women form 23% of the Bahraini workforce; they range between low, mid or even high level management with a percentage of 25% in the public sector and 21% in the private sector. Nevertheless, the Kingdom of Bahrain offers top priority to women in various fields and sectors of the labor market, especially since Bahraini women have proved competent to hold significant roles in the various sectors; they even hold 32% of the leading executive positions. In the engineering sector, Bahraini women have achieved much over the last 50 years (Alayam, 2017).

The challenge is how to strengthen the proportion of women in high management positions within the engineering sector, as is the case in many countries around the world. Thus, the importance of this study is to explore the current status of Bahraini women in the engineering sector through a number of factors that influence their presence and success in leading positions. These factors are such as nature of their work, their ability to participate in decision-making, management and leadership stereotypes, balancing between holding a leading position and maintaining social responsibilities, fringe benefits, and equality in opportunities. Finally the research will come up with recommendations that will increase the status of leading Bahraini women in this sector, which will consequently contribute to reinforcing their role in the national economy.

Problem Statement

The research investigates the current situation of engineering women in leading positions in Bahraini public and private sectors, which is an area that has not been studied before, discussing some factors that affect the access of women to these positions; this will be done by a quantitative research methodology of a sample of Bahraini women in this sector. At the end, the research will come up with recommendations to increase the status of leading Bahraini women in this sector, which will consequently contribute to reinforcing their role in this extremely important sector.

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