

Challenges Facing Female Employees in Quick Service Restaurants: Egypt as a Case Study

Faten Mohamed Hussien Ali

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Helwan University, Egypt

Abstract

There is growing evidence about the importance of female employees in the service sector in general and restaurants in particular. Although females play an active role in the overall restaurant labor market, little is known about obstacles facing them in restaurants. Therefore, this study investigates challenges facing female employees in quick service restaurants (QSRs). A measurement tool in the form of a questionnaire was used to test the perceptions of females towards challenges in QSRs. The questionnaire consisted of four constructs for measuring female employee's perceptions towards challenges of work-performance, personal challenges, work-environment, and family/society. Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test and exploratory factor analysis were used to analyze 127 questionnaire forms collected from female employees in QSRs. The results of the study depicts that gender discrimination, workload, stress, low salaries, bad promotion prospects, working hours were the major challenges facing female employees in QSRs. The Results suggests that managers of QSRs should continue to work on improving many aspects of the working conditions facing female employees, particularly in regards to promotion opportunities, career prospects, and empowerment.

Keywords: Female employees; Quick service restaurants (QSRs); Challenges.

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Introduction

The increasing numbers of women in employment have changed the face of hospitality organizations.⁽¹⁾ According to the International Labor Organization, over 200 million people are employed in the hospitality and tourism industry in 2009, and women represent 55.5%.⁽²⁾ The tourism industry will continue to be one of the major growth areas of employment for women⁽³⁾. However, this concern differs according to the culture. For example in African culture, it is taboo for a woman to lead a society, and there are even supporting idioms and proverbs strictly on this specific issue. Thus, each sex group is taught and prepared separately for its future roles in terms of the curriculum that was specifically designed for that purpose⁽⁴⁾. Women are taught to submit themselves to their husbands and to men in general, while men are taught that they are heads of families and also leaders of their society⁽⁵⁾.

Women are usually facing some challenges in the hospitality. More specifically, they are more likely to experience poor working conditions, inequality of opportunity and treatment, violence, exploitation, stress, work/family conflict, necessity for long hours and geographical mobility⁽⁶⁾. In addition, the wages of the women in the hospitality industry are low compared to other sectors⁽⁷⁾. Women tend to be aggressive instead of being assertive, tend to be apologetic when they are expected to be decisive, become easily angry when they should be calm; and tend to become negative when they should be positive⁽⁸⁾. Yet, the link between overall working conditions and the challenges faced by women in hospitality industry needs to be better understood. This understanding needs to focus on the employment opportunities that hospitality industry offers to women who, in many countries, represent a majority of employees in the sector but, at the same time, find themselves significantly under-represented in higher paid and managerial positions.⁽⁹⁾

Most of the studies investigating hospitality career challenges facing female employees have been conducted some as here such as In Hong Kong,⁽¹⁰⁾ UK,⁽¹¹⁾ and Turkey,⁽¹²⁾ while only one study has investigated career challenges for female managers in the Egyptian hotels.⁽¹³⁾ In addition, the majority of those studies have studied women's working conditions and gender equality, however little researches have investigated the types of problems facing female employees when working in the service sector especially in quick service restaurants (QSRs). Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate the challenges facing female employees in QSRs in Egypt.

Review of Literature

Work performance challenges

Work performance challenging facing female employees in the service sector include workload, low wages, irregular and extra working hours, difficulty in getting persistence and promotion.⁽¹⁴⁾ In spite of the increasing employment of women at all management levels, the inequalities in work and pay have not yet been overcome. Women are generally employed at lower levels for the same length of service and have career breaks, which impact their salaries and promotions.⁽¹⁵⁾ Long working hours in the service sector are considered as a distinctive feature of the barriers facing women's progression.⁽¹⁶⁾ A further distinctive feature of female employment is the fact that women earn less than men. Women's average gross weekly earnings are considerably lower even in those industries where women predominate, whilst in male dominated industries the discrepancy between male and female earnings tends to be larger as in the hotel and catering industry. Men earn on average about two-thirds higher than women.⁽¹⁷⁾

Personal challenges

A vast majority of the business and hospitality literature reports that females are more disadvantaged in the workplace than males regarding promotion,⁽¹⁸⁾ empowerment,⁽¹⁹⁾ and motivation.⁽²⁰⁾ Gender inequality is manifested in reality by that "women perform 66 percent of the world's work, produce 50 percent of the food, but earn 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property".⁽²¹⁾ The reasons for this situation are widespread: women have lower access to land, capital and education than men and women face discrimination and trouble with work and family life.⁽²²⁾ Several studies demonstrate a significant gap in income between male and female employees in the hospitality sector, with females earning less than male counterparts.⁽²³⁾ Such gender-based income gaps have been represented as a form of gender discrimination within the hospitality sector.⁽²⁴⁾

Tourism and hospitality industry employment is described as a pyramid, with many women located in seasonal and part-time jobs at the lower end but relatively few reaching the top. Even if a woman was to gain a position in management, she would not necessarily benefit from equal pay.⁽¹⁹⁾ These factors deter women from continuing their professional careers in the hospitality industry, for fear of interference with their private and social lives. The hospitality business still provides fewer opportunities for promotion that are insufficient to meet the expectations of women.⁽²⁵⁾

Work environment challenges

Uncomfortable working conditions in the service sector are considered as critical challenges facing female employees.⁽²⁶⁾ Hard work in restaurants is of a strenuous nature and may involve long periods of standing, a lot of walking (often in uncomfortable shoes for women), carrying (heavy) loads, repetitive movements, working in painful positions and walking up/down stairs, and heavy workload coupled with high levels of stress resulting from time pressure and constant customer contact.⁽²⁷⁾ Furthermore, constant contact with water and cleansing products is a key risk. And women are judged for what they wear and how they wear it, whereas men are rarely judged for attire; Also women are judged more harshly for behavior.⁽²⁸⁾ Women might be labeled as temperamental or emotional, while a man demonstrating the same behavior would just be thought of as aggressive and possessing a pragmatic style.⁽²⁹⁾ It all boils down to what is acceptable for a woman is much narrower than for a man.⁽³⁰⁾

Equity theory suggested that if individuals perceive that their performance is not rewarded on an equitable basis, they may reduce their efforts and performance, or even leave the company. On the other hand, if an individual perceives the reward system to be equitable, they may engage in citizenship behaviors.⁽³¹⁾ Women report greater citizen behavior when reward distributions are perceived to be more equitable than when they are inequitable.⁽³²⁾ In particular, "if female employees feel that the measurement system under which they are evaluated is fair their loyalty to the organization is reinforced."⁽³³⁾

Family and society challenges

Work and family issues, which are increasingly popular topics in contemporary organizational research, have received little attention in hospitality and tourism journals.⁽³⁴⁾ Despite the paucity of research, many characteristics of jobs in the hospitality industry have long been associated with work-family conflict.⁽³⁵⁾ Conflicts between family responsibilities and work affect women's decisions to work in hospitality industry.⁽³⁶⁾ In addition, the combination of physical work and long work hours often deter women from

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working in hospitality organizations.⁽³⁷⁾ For women, working in hospitality organizations may mean spending limited time with the family, friends and relatives for social interaction, communication and leisure.⁽³⁸⁾ However, in a number of studies it was found that many women are committed and willing to work night shifts, long hours and weekends in order to progress in their careers.⁽¹⁶⁾

Success in the hospitality industry usually involves long hours and frequent geographical moves, and it is difficult to meet these needs and still satisfy family needs and cultural prospective.⁽³⁹⁾ Similar to other industries in which cultures, practices, and routines make it difficult for women to advance, structural and cultural barriers continue to prevent women to move into top management positions in hotel firms. These barriers include a highly variable demand cycle which imposes unsocial working hours on female employees and can make shift patterns unpredictable, both of which are difficult to reconcile with family and career responsibilities.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Methodology

Survey Instrument

This study employed an electronic web-based survey and paper-based survey as a data-gathering instrument, as adapted and revised from previous research.⁽¹⁵⁾ The survey was fine-tuned through discussions with various stakeholders, including QSRs managers, supervisors and employers. It was pilot-tested to verify the validity of the questions being used as well as to assess the wording of the questions, the continuity and flow, the question sequence, length and timing. The final version of the questionnaire was divided into two sections. In the first section, female employees were asked to rate the 31 items in response to the question: *to what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement?* On a 5-point Likert scale: "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "agree," and "strongly disagree." In the second section, female employees were asked for profiling information (gender, age, etc.).

Sample, Sampling, and Procedures

Female employees working in QSRs were chosen for this study. Purposive sampling was used as a method of finding respondents. This approach was adopted as it was convenient to quantitative research. The power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied. The type of purposive sampling used is homogeneous sampling, as this survey was interested in exploring the challenges facing female employees in QSRs. Female employees were selected from three kind of restaurants, were chicken, burger, and pizza restaurants. To increase the response rate, two survey administrative procedures were used, electronic web-based survey and paper-based survey. All survey instruments assured confidentially as no personal information was asked. A total of 200 questionnaires were randomly distributed to female employees in QSRs. A total of 127 complete questionnaires was received, representing a response rate of 63.5 percent.

Statistical analysis

In this study, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to refine the scale of the female employees' challenges using SPSS version 20. First, the principal component analysis was used to extract the factors. The number of factors to be retained was guided by Kaiser's criterion (i.e., Eigenvalues above 1). Second, oblique rotation of factors using Oblimin rotation was employed. Besides, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to test differences among the types of job (i.e., part-time vs. full-time). Moreover, the Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to explore the differences between age, experience, and marital status groups.

Results

Profile of respondents

The female employees comprised 33.3 percent full-time job and 66.7 percent part-time. They were from various age groups, with the largest group (53.5 percent) of female employees being from 18 to 23 years old. Female employees having five years of working experience comprised 30.7, whereas 22.8 percent had less than two years. Regarding the marital status, the majority of the females employees were singles, followed by married females with children (i.e., 20.5 percent), and married females without children (i.e., 14.2 percent). Regarding to the type of restaurants, 38.6 percent of the female employees were working in pizza restaurants, 36.2 percent in chicken restaurants, and 25.2 percent in burger restaurants.

A Descriptive analysis of the challenges facing female employees

SPSS version 20 was used to analyze the challenges facing female employees in QSRs (i.e., 31-items) descriptively. The 31 items were analyzed for their means, medians, modes and standard deviations as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: A descriptive analysis of female employees' challenges

Items	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Too much workload	4.15	4.00	Strongly agree	.900
Moral problems	4.03	4.00	Strongly agree	1.043
Low payment	3.99	4.00	Strongly agree	1.027
Physical problems	3.97	4.00	Strongly agree	1.201
Uncomfortable work environment	3.78	3.00	Moderate	4.751
Extra working hour without payment	3.63	4.00	Strongly agree	1.500
Job is not combined with parenthood	3.61	4.00	Moderate	1.176
Ignoring personal opinion	3.55	4.00	Strongly agree	2.084
Difficult working conditions	3.50	4.00	Disagree	1.030
Promotion discrimination	3.47	4.00	Disagree	1.332
disrespect from Society	3.42	3.00	Strongly agree	1.439
Discrimination in evaluation	3.35	4.00	Disagree	1.411
Boring work routine	3.28	3.00	moderate	1.301
Lack of empowerment	3.28	3.00	Strongly agree	1.303
Unsuitable working shift	3.24	3.00	moderate	1.263
Lack of motivation	3.23	3.00	Strongly agree	1.497
Career dissatisfaction	3.22	3.00	Strongly agree	1.362
Payroll discrimination	3.19	3.00	Disagree	1.413
Lack of job responsibility	3.17	3.00	Agree	1.430
High turnover	3.13	3.00	moderate	1.272
Skills development problems	3.12	3.00	Disagree	1.451
Employment discrimination	3.11	3.00	Disagree	1.323
Lack of participation	3.07	3.00	Agree	1.363

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Lack of training opportunities	3.01	3.00	Disagree	1.472
Obligatory changes in my habits and traditions	3.00	3.00	Strongly agree	1.491
Lack of communication with colleagues and managers	2.95	3.00	Agree	1.314
Difficulties when working as a team	2.92	3.00	Moderate	1.219
Unsuitable uniform	2.91	3.00	Moderate	1.189
Bad treatment from customers	2.79	3.00	Moderate	1.213
Family reject my career	2.69	3.00	Moderate	1.372
Difficulties in working with a hair cover	2.55	2.00	Agree	1.301

Table 1 shows that all female challenges items ($n = 31$; 100%) had mean and median scores above 2.00. All the factors were rated by female employees as critical challenges facing them. Based on this finding, all the 31 challenges (Mean ≥ 2.00 ; Median ≥ 2.00) will be subjected to principal component analysis to refine the female challenges scale.

Variance between female employees' groups regarding their challenges

The variance between full-time and part-time female employees

Mann-Whitney U test was used to test differences between full-time female employees ($n = 43$) and part-time female employees ($n = 84$) in terms of the challenges facing them (Table 2). For example, do full-time job and part-time differ in terms of challenges? The results revealed no statistically significant difference between full-time and part-time female employees in terms of some challenges (i.e., 15 items). More specifically, full-time and part-time female employees had similar agreement towards some challenges; career satisfaction, unsuitable uniform, moral problems, uncomfortable work environment, bad treatment from customer, lack of job responsibilities, lack of empowerment, and ignoring personal opinion. Meanwhile, the results revealed statistically significant difference between full-time and part-time employees in terms of 16 challenges. The results showed that the full-time female employees had higher concerns towards too much workload ($m = 68.12$), unsuitable working shift ($m = 65.26$), difficult working conditions ($m = 66.30$), and job is not combined with parenthood ($m = 65.77$), compared to the part-time female employees.

Table 2: The differences between full-time and part-time female employees

Challenges facing female employees	Type of job	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Too much workload	Full time	68.12	1570.000	-1.079-	.281
	Part time	61.19			
Boring work routine	Full time	50.46	1216.500	-2.906-	.004*
	Part time	70.02			
Extra working hour without payment	Full time	50.50	1218.000	-2.966-	.003*
	Part time	70.00			
Unsuitable working shift	Full time	65.26	1478.500	-1.511-	.693

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	Part time	62.62			
Low payment	Full time	55.10	1411.000	-1.926-	.054*
	Part-time	67.70			
Difficult working conditions	Full-time	66.30	1646.500	-.634-	.526
	Part-time	62.10			
High turnover	Full-time	48.65	1140.500	-3.308-	.001*
	Part-time	70.92			
Career dissatisfaction	Full-time	56.70	1478.500	-1.511-	.131
	Part-time	66.90			
Employment discrimination	Full-time	50.83	1232.000	-2.815-	.005*
	Part-time	69.83			
Promotion discrimination	Full-time	53.92	1361.500	-2.147-	.032*
	Part-time	68.29			
Payroll discrimination	Full-time	46.20	1037.500	-3.847-	.000*
	Part-time	72.15			
Discrimination in evaluation	Full-time	49.33	1169.000	-3.183-	.001*
	Part-time	70.58			
Difficulties in working with a hair cover	Full-time	47.15	1077.500	-3.658-	.000*
	Part-time	71.67			
Unsuitable uniform	Full-time	59.49	1595.500	-.906-	.365
	Part-time	65.51			

(Continued)

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Table 2 (cont.): The differences between full-time and part-time female employees

Challenges facing female employees	Type of job	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Physical problems	Full-time	53.27	1334.500	-2.379-	.017*
	Part-time	68.61			
Moral problems	Full-time	57.42	1508.500	-1.299-	.194
	Part-time	65.83			
Uncomfortable work environment	Full-time	55.76	1439.000	-1.732-	.083
	Part-time	67.37			
Lack of communication with colleges and mangers	Full-time	54.89	1402.500	-1.915-	.055*
	Part-time	67.80			
Difficulties when working as a team	Full-time	58.00	1533.000	-1.228-	.219
	Part-time	66.25			
Bad treatment from customers	Full-time	63.79	1752.000	-.064-	.949
	Part-time	63.36			
Lack of participation	Full-time	50.60	1213.500	-2.650-	.008*
	Part-time	68.38			
Lack of job responsibility	Full-time	60.10	1621.000	-.759-	.448
	Part-time	65.20			
Lack of empowerment	Full-time	58.06	1535.500	-1.213-	.225
	Part-time	66.22			
Ignoring personal opinion	Full-time	55.51	1428.500	-1.785-	.074
	Part-time	67.49			
Lack of motivation	Full-time	52.29	1293.000	-2.501-	.012*
	Part-time	69.11			
Lack of training opportunities	Full-time	51.01	1239.500	-2.776-	.005*
	Part-time	69.74			
Skills development problems	Full-time	51.01	1241.500	-2.771-	.006*
	Part-time	69.74			

Family reject my career	Full-time	51.01	1735.000	-.156-	.876
	Part-time	69.74			
Unrespectable from Society	Full-time	58.85	158.500	-1.046-	.296
	Part-time	65.83			
Job is not combined with parenthood	Full-time	65.77	1668.500	-.513-	.608
	Part-time	62.36			
Obligatory changes in my habits and traditions	Full-time	54.05	1367.000	-2.102-	.036*
	Part-time	68.23			

* P-value<0.05= Significant difference

The variance between age, marital status, and working experience

Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test for differences between the age groups, marital status, and working experience of the female employees (Table 3). For age group, boxplot graphs showed that as age group increased, female employees showed lower perceptions toward boring work routine, extra working hour without payment, high turnover, employment discrimination, payroll discrimination, discrimination in evaluation, difficulties in working with a hair cover, physical problems, moral problems, lack of participation, lack of motivation, lack of training opportunities, and skills development challenges. In addition, the results revealed that females employees who had more family responsibilities (i.e., married, children) had higher perceptions regarding promotion discrimination, payroll discrimination, discrimination in evaluation, difficulties in working with a hair cover, lack of empowerment, ignoring personal opinion and job is not combined with parenthood. again single females showed higher perceptions regarding extra working hour without payment, high turnover, and employment discrimination compared to married females. Moreover, the results indicated that as working experience increased, lower became the perceptions regarding extra working hour without payment, employment discrimination, promotion discrimination, payroll discrimination, discrimination in evaluation, lack of participation, lack of job responsibility, and skills development problems.

Table 3: The differences between ages, marital status, and experience groups

Challenges facing female employees	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		
	Age	Marital status	Working experience
Too much workload	.186	.115	.141
Boring work routine	.000*	.016	.002*
Extra working hour without payment	.000*	.000*	.000*
Unsuitable working shift	.581	.958	.061
Low payment	.010*	.255	.247
Difficult working conditions	.716	.151	.461
High turnover	.000*	.005*	.074

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Career dissatisfaction	.019	.274	.351
Employment discrimination	.000*	.001*	.010*
Promotion discrimination	.003*	.031*	.029*
Payroll discrimination	.000*	.000*	.009*
Discrimination in evaluation	.000*	.000*	.002*
Difficulties in working with hair cover	.001*	.008*	.080
Unsuitable uniform	.451	.654	.517
Physical problems	.003*	.263	.146
Moral problems	.039*	.444	.373
Uncomfortable work environment	.012	.337	.355
Lack of communication with colleges and managers	.108	.128	.761
Difficulties when working as a team	.169	.458	.653
Bad treatment from customers	.786	.850	.042*
Lack of participation	.003*	.008*	.006*
Lack of job responsibility	.033*	.246	.002*
Lack of empowerment	.006*	.052*	.008*
Ignoring personal opinion	.000*	.004*	.039*
Lack of motivation	.000*	.013	.000*
Lack of training opportunities	.000*	.049	.014*
Skills development problems	.003*	.105	.039*
Family rejects my career	.885	.927	.149
disrespect from Society	.858	.642	.218
Job is not combined with parenthood	.328	.013*	.001*
Obligatory changes in my habits and traditions	.139	.134	.144

* P-value<0.05= Significant difference

Exploratory factor analysis

The 31 items of female employees' challenges were subjected to the principal component analysis (PCA) using SPSS version 20. Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of .3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .845, exceeding the recommended value of .6 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was

highly significant ($p < .000$), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA revealed four eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 32.4 %, 7.8%, 6.3% and 5.3% of the variance respectively.

Inspection of the pattern matrix (Table 4) showed a relatively clear four-factor solution (i.e., work performance, personal traits, work environment, and family/society), with the exception of unsuitable working shift, difficult working conditions, unsuitable uniform, difficulties in working with a hair cover, bad treatment from customers, ignoring personal opinion, and uncomfortable work environment. More specifically, unsuitable working shift and difficult working conditions items loaded moderately (.478, .475 respectively) onto work performance factor. Also, unsuitable uniform and difficulties in working with a hair cover items loaded moderately (.219, .296 respectively) and inappropriately onto personal challenges factor. To that end, bad treatment from customers and ignoring personal opinion items loaded weakly (.061, .321 respectively) and inappropriately onto work environment factor.

The Principal component analysis with Oblimin rotation was repeated after removing the seven challenges items (i.e., working shift, difficult working conditions, unsuitable uniform, and difficulties in working with hair cover, bad treatment from customers, ignoring personal opinion, and uncomfortable work environment.). This resulted in a 23-item female employee's challenges scale, with six work-performance items, five personal challenges items, seven work environment items, and four items in family and society. The pattern matrix showed separation of the factor subscales. All items loaded above .471 on their respect factors. The 23-item female employee's challenges scale had a Cronbach's alpha value of .925, indicating good internal consistency. Figure 1 illustrates the most critical challenges facing female employees in QSR as emerged from the EFA.

Table 4: Pattern matrix for PCA of a 31-item, four-factor solution

Challenges facing female employees	Work performance	Personal challenges	work environment	Family and society
Extra working hour without payment	.697	-.129-	.254	.121
Career dissatisfaction	.694	.032	.126	.332
High turnover	.675	.096	.112	.271
Boring work routine	.567	-.023-	-.064-	.347
Low payment	.541	.057	.321	.204
Too much workload	.584	.290	-.392-	.302
Unsuitable working shift	.478	.059	-.197-	-.118-
Difficult working conditions	.475	.383	-.188-	.283
Discrimination in Evaluation	-.300-	.688	.278	.130
Employment discrimination	-.373-	.616	.232	-.033-
Promotion discrimination	-.321-	.614	.255	.007
Moral problems	-.043-	.555	.110	.094
Payroll discrimination	-.433-	.543	.197	.189
Unsuitable uniform	.219	.455	.396	-.275-
Difficulties in working with hair cover	.296	.346	-.276-	-.231-
Lack of training opportunities	-.195-	-.158-	.804	-.194-
Lack of motivation	-.292-	-.225-	.774	-.152-

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Skills development problems	-.213-	-.158-	.762	-.126-
Lack of empowerment	-.224-	-.113-	.756	-.343-
Lack of job responsibility	-.270-	-.084-	.712	-.350-
Lack of participation	-.178-	-.027-	.710	-.353-
Lack of communication with collages and	-.133-	.130	.652	.190
Difficulties when working as a team	-.352-	.158	.576	.099
Bad treatment from customers	-.061-	.321	.484	.001
Ignoring personal opinion	.321	-.137-	-.434-	-.019-
Uncomfortable work environment	-.182-	.149	.320	.327
Job is not combined with parenthood	.238	-.301-	.250	.553
Obligatory changes in my habits and traditions	-.129-	.289	.265	.530
disrespect from Society	-.183-	.464	.186	.529
Family rejects my career	.359	-.289-	.166	.504

Note: Bold figures indicate major loading for each item.

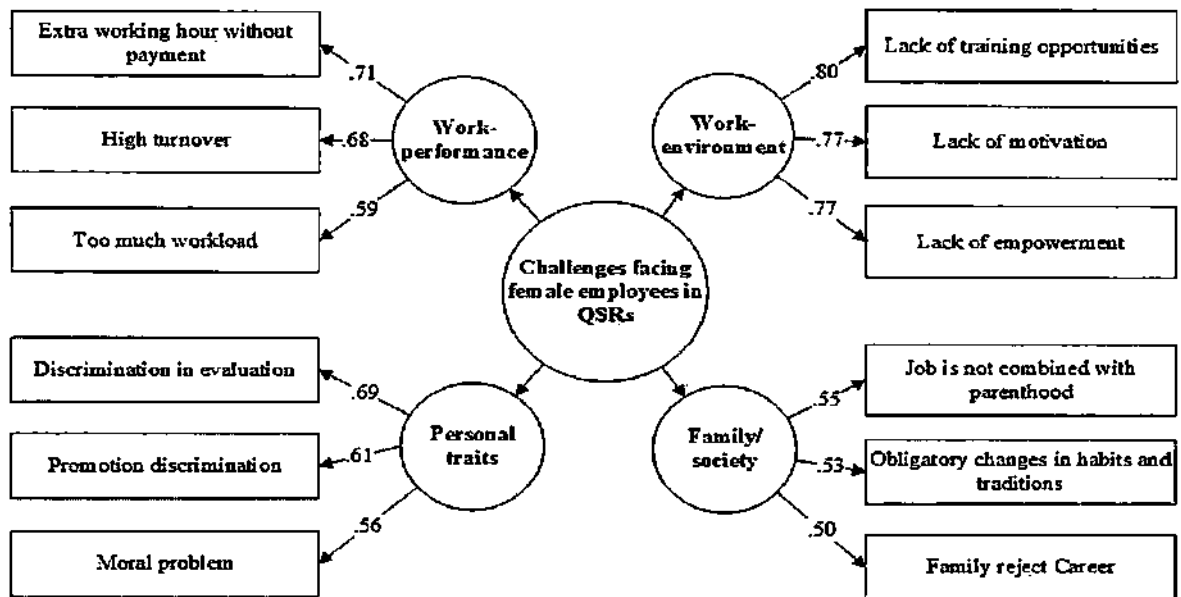


Figure 1: The most critical challenges facing female employees in QSRs as emerged from the EFA.

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study revealed some work-performance challenges facing female employees in QSRs. These challenges included: too much workload, boring work routine, ⁽⁴¹⁾ extra working hour without payment, high turnover, and career dissatisfaction. ⁽⁴²⁾ In addition, the results of the current study indicated that unsuitable working shifts, low pay, and heavy working conditions were the most critical problems facing female employees in QSRs. ⁽¹⁶⁾ This is consistent with prior studies which reported that women are leaving the hospitality industry at a much higher rate than men. This proves that this discrepancy is a major

challenge facing females in the hospitality industry.⁽³⁶⁾ Therefore, this study suggest that QSR managers should help their female employees by creating performance metrics that eliminate gender bias by setting clear roles and responsibilities for every job within the restaurant.

The results of the current study mentioned some significant personal challenges facing female employees in QSRs. These challenges included: moral problems, discrimination in evaluation,⁽¹⁸⁾ employment and promotion.⁽⁴³⁾ This is consistent with previous studies which showed that women working in hospitality are more disadvantaged in the workplace than males for example in moral problems, evaluation and promotion.⁽¹⁹⁾ In addition, women in the service sector face discrimination and trouble regarding employment, evaluation, and promotion.⁽²⁰⁾ Also women are not promoted to senior management positions at the same rate of men.⁽²⁰⁾ Therefore, QSR managers should make female employees succession transparent by posting jobs regularly to ensure diverse candidate slate. Moreover, QSR managers should provide equal opportunity by promoting talent identification regarding gender and development on the basis of transparent access for women and men.

The results also indicated that some of work-environment challenges had significant effects on female employees in QSRs. In particular, lack of training opportunities, lack of motivation, lack of empowerment,⁽²⁷⁾ lack of job responsibility, and lack of communication with colleagues and managers were the most critical work-environment challenges facing female employees in QSRs.⁽³²⁾ These findings are consistent with previously-published findings which confirmed that formal training and education in tourism was the most important motive for the employees to work in this industry.⁽³⁰⁾ This finding implies that providing formal training and education can directly influence female employees' decisions to work in QSRs. The most important motives for working in hospitality were: Having an interesting job environment; working in a pleasant surrounding environment that leads to deal with people in good way; achieving a better living standard and working under better conditions.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Therefore, this study suggests that, in order to increase the effectiveness of female employees in QSRs, managers should focus on training opportunities for female employees instead of sending only high-performing male employees to attend the company's training courses; perhaps also it is wise to provide training to those who are considered less performing female in order to assist them to perform better and to pave their way for future career advancement. Doing so could eliminate some female employees' feelings of inequality.

The current study focused on some of family/society challenges facing female employees in QSRs. These challenges included: job is not combined with parenthood, obligatory changes in habits and traditions,⁽³⁶⁾ and disrespect from society and family rejects career. This is consistent with prior studies which conformed that cultures, sociality, and routines make it difficult for women to work in the service sector.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Women find it more difficult to combine and balance career goals with family life and personal commitments.⁽³⁴⁾ Especially in hospitality industry where frequent moves, long hours, and weekend/holiday work are required to achieve success, female lodging professionals find it hard to balance their work and personal lives.⁽³⁹⁾ To overcome this obstacle, women need a strong work and family support system to connect work with home life. Therefore, this study recommend that QSR managers should support suitable childcare provision to enable female employees to remain within their workforce. In addition, QSRs should keep flexible shifts for those female employees with children.

Regarding the profile of female employees; the results showed that the full-time female employees faced more challenges regarding work-performance and family/society compared to the part-time female employees. Therefore, this study suggests that QSRs should give equal attention to both full-time and part-time employees. also the results showed that as age group increased, female employees showed lower perception toward work performance and personal challenges like payroll discrimination, physical discrimination, and moral problems. Beside more challenges with family/society factor. these findings are consistent with the findings of several previous research studies.⁽³⁴⁾ Therefore, this study suggests that QSR managers should follow family-friendly policies that delegate more responsibility to female employees for the management of their work life and give them greater flexibility in choosing the way in which their work can be accomplished. This in turn will increase the effectiveness of female employees in QSRs. For example, female employees may choose shifts which comply with their family responsibilities. Again, the results revealed that females' employees who had more family responsibilities (married, children) had higher perceptions regarding personal and family/society challenges such as discrimination in promotion, payroll, and evaluation. These results agree with previous findings which showed that work-family conflict is the

most critical factor.⁽¹⁵⁾ Females' employees are expected to contribute to their family's income and continue to fulfil their traditional duties as wife, mother and daughter. Even when women can hire domestic help (housemaid), their major family responsibilities will remain. As a result, work-family conflicts not only reduce the female employee's life satisfaction; but also adversely affect her work quality.⁽¹⁶⁾ Therefore, the current study suggests that QSRs should consider family responsibilities of their female employees. Finally, the results showed that as working experience increased, female employees had lower perceptions regarding work performance, work-environment and personal challenges decrease. For example lack of participation, extra working hour without payment, and skills development problems were the most pronounced challenges. Therefore, this study suggests that QSR managers should remove the obstacles that hinder female employees' participation in the QSRs. Provision of better social and physical security, flexible working conditions and shifts, and access to flexible arrangements for training and development could be good examples to overcome these challenges.

Limitation and future research

This study has several limitations, first, this study employed only self-reported questionnaire. Further study could do more interviews and focus groups through research utilizing a wider range of female employees in QSRs. Second, there is an unbalanced representation in the sample across different age groups, and older female employees had different views than younger ones. Third, this study explored only the views of the female employees in QSRs. Future studies could explore female employees in hotels as views and opinions could differ in different work settings. Finally, this study focused only on the challenges facing female who is employed in entry-level positions. The same research topic could also be conducted by surveying female employees in the top management positions.

Conclusions

The current study investigated challenges facing female employees in QSRs. The exploratory factor analysis grouped the challenges into four main constructs which are work-performance challenges, personal challenges, work-environmental challenges, and family/society challenges. Extra working hour without payment, career high turnover, too much workload, and unsuitable working shift were the major work-performance challenges facing female employees in QSRs. Regarding personal challenges, most female employees focused on discrimination in evaluation, employment, and promotion challenges. Lack of training opportunities, lack of motivation, lack of empowerment, and lack of participation were the major work-environmental challenges. Finally, job is not combined with parenthood, obligatory changes in habits and traditions, and a family rejects their career were the most mentioned family/society challenges. As a result, QSR managers should give more intention to such challenges.

التحديات التي تواجه المرأة العاملة في مطاعم الخدمة السريعة: مصر كدراسة حالة

فئات محمد حسين علي

مدرس بكلية السياحة والفنادق - جامعة حلوان - مصر

الملخص

إن خروج المرأة إلى ميدان العمل في العصر الحديث أصبح ظاهرة كبيرة تستدعي الاهتمام ، فضلاً عن زيادة مساهمتها في سوق العمل في مؤسسات الضيافة بصفة عامة والمطاعم بصفة خاصة. وبالرغم من تزايد أعداد المرأة العاملة في مطاعم الخدمة السريعة إلا أن العديد من التحديات مازالت تواجهها في سوق مطاعم الخدمة السريعة. لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على أهم التحديات التي تواجه المرأة العاملة في مطاعم الخدمة السريعة في مصر. تم دراسة أربعة تحديات رئيسية على النحو التالي: تحديات متعلقة بأداء العمل ، تحديات شخصية ، تحديات في بيئة العمل، وتحديات من جانب الأسرة والمجتمع. تم تصميم وتوزيع عدد 200 استمارة استقصاء بين السيدات العاملات في مطاعم الخدمة السريعة في مصر، وتم تحليل عدد 127 استمارة استقصاء وذلك باستخدام أسلوب تحليل العوامل (Exploratory Factor Analysis). أوضحت نتائج البحث أن التفرقة العنصرية داخل محيط العمل ، وكثرة ساعات العمل ، وانخفاض مستوى الدخل ، والتمييز في التعيين والتحفيز وتقلص فرص الترقى كانت من أهم التحديات التي تواجه المرأة العاملة في مطاعم الخدمة السريعة. وكان من أهم التوصيات التي يوصى بها البحث هي ضرورة اهتمام مدراء مطاعم الخدمة السريعة بإعطاء أهمية أكبر للمرأة العاملة وإعادة دراسة اللوائح والقواعد بإنصافها ومساواتها بالرجل، مع ضرورة الاهتمام بالناحية النفسية والأسرية لهن ، وتوفير بيئة عمل مريحة وأجواء عمل مناسبة.

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