

G.A. Sarseke¹

Kiyong Byun²

¹L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan

²Korea University, Seoul, South Korea

(E-mail: sarseke_ga@enu.kz, byun0905@korea.ac.kr)

The representation of women in senior management in Kazakhstan universities

Abstract. *The article analyses the representation of women in senior university management through qualitative interviews with nine senior female managers in Kazakhstan. The literature suggests that the organizational and social-cultural barriers exist for women to enter higher stages of university management. The interview results with Kazakh women have revealed that there are similarities and differences with other countries in the academic careers of women and their representation in senior management. Kazakh respondents mostly did not consider that women face structural barriers in rising their academic careers, though they exist. They also did not comment on the male dominance at the top and among the academic staff in Kazakhstan universities. In contrast, the Kazakh interviewees acknowledged the probability of feminization of the Kazakh higher education system as that currently seen in secondary and primary schools in the country. Family support reported by most interviewees is considered a cultural factor in Kazakhstani women's career advancement.*

Keywords: *senior manager, female, academic career, higher education, Kazakhstan, university*

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Introduction

Despite open discussion about female leadership which consistently emphasizes the underrepresentation of women in every sphere of political and economic life in countries around the world, very little is known about women and leadership, especially in the context of higher education, in Kazakhstan. The literature concerning women and leadership including higher education leadership predominantly emerges from the west. Western countries have published many quantitative and qualitative studies, whereas developing countries mainly rely on some gender-disaggregated statistics and

quantitative studies often funded by international organizations. Kazakhstan is no exception. The scarcity of data and qualitative studies on women and leadership in Kazakhstan indicates that this area is comparatively new and less explored in terms of research. Available research includes reports of international organizations that highlight some gender issues in Kazakhstan's society, and state statistical data on gender which is mostly focused on numbers [12; 13].

Kazakhstani women are employed in lower-paid sectors and less prestigious professions. «Women represent over 70% of total employees in spheres such as education and health care» as indicated in the international report [30]. These

fields offer low salaries [52], and hence it results in gender-based differences in remuneration and unemployment [30]. Even though overwhelming numbers of women are employed in the education sector in Kazakhstan, a few of them reach higher stages of management. According to the Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan [51], only 12,3% of women held senior leadership posts, while 87,7% of men occupied senior positions in the higher education system in Kazakhstan in 2016. Additionally, traditional gender roles and cultural beliefs continue to dominate in the education and employment sectors in Kazakhstan [41]. Therefore, this research has been conducted to find more about women leaders in the Kazakh higher education system, and the factors which might explain why they are under-represented at the highest levels of management in universities.

This research is a part of the qualitative study about female university leaders in Kazakhstan. The study aims to explore the questions concerning gender equality in higher education systems with the emphasis on the under-representation of women in higher stages of management in Kazakhstan universities and the possible factors that affect women's participation in senior levels of university management. The study will aim to discuss women's representation in three senior management positions in higher education: vice-chancellor/rector, deputy vice-chancellor/pro-rector, and dean. Firstly, the article analyzes the literature concerning the under-representation of women in senior university management across the countries and possible reasons for their under-representation. Then, the findings relating to the main research questions will be discussed. Finally, the authors identify the key factors of the scarcity of women in senior management at Kazakhstan universities and the unique features of Kazakh female leaders' career life.

The literature reviews

Senior women managers 'Too Few for Too Long'

Women have been underrepresented in higher positions of university management for many decades, while men continue to occupy

the most powerful posts in academies. The feminist movement is concerned that female managers in education have been 'too few for too long' and sought to explore why there is a 'higher you go, the fewer you see' syndrome for women in educational management' [47, 18]. A cross-national study by Bagilhole and White [8] explores universities in both European and non-European countries, which exhibit a low percentage of women in senior management positions. Although Turkey leads Europe, with 28% of its full professors being female, Turkish women remain at a lower level (only 10%) of university rectors. In contrast, Sweden leads with 41% of its vice-chancellors being female despite the fact that female professors make up only 18% of its academic staff [24, 54]. Australia is among the other countries with a comparatively high representation of women vice-chancellors, at 18%. The number of senior female managers is low in UK universities, at only 8% for female vice-chancellors [24, 54]. According to the European Commission [48], in 2009 female vice-chancellors in the 27 European countries made up 13% of the total. In 2014 the percentage of women heads of higher education institutions in 28 European countries rose by 20.1% [49], and it slightly increased to 21.7% in 2017 [50]. These numbers indicate that despite equal opportunity policies being developed and passed into law in many countries, and the number of women who hold a wide range of leadership roles has increased in the last decades, women's share in top-level leadership in higher education institutions remains low. This underrepresentation can be viewed from several perspectives: first, it is an indication of gender inequalities in universities, and second, exclusion of women from the decisions and contributions to the future of universities [38, 120]. It also indicates, according to Fraser (1997), both 'cultural misrecognition and material and intellectual oppression' [37, 109].

Several reasons have been offered to explain why women are under-represented in higher education management. Internal and external barriers are discussed by scholars as possible explanations for why women are not more

strongly represented in leadership levels of higher education. The first focuses on individual women as having internal barriers that discourage them from career advancement. This approach blames the victim for their lack of achievement in leadership, and it originates from psychological behavior such as lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and lack of motivation and aspirations [25]. Most feminists disagree with the 'blame the victim' approach, arguing that the social structures rather than internal barriers produce more inequalities [1; 47]. Women's lack of self-confidence might result from a gender-segregated society that constructs the myth that women fail inability, and thus women's lower self-confidence because of external, not internal, barriers [47, 85]. However, we do not remove internal barriers in achieving higher posts of management by women. Instead, women's personal characteristics are recognized as playing a role in their rise on the career ladder. Regarding external barriers, these describe structural factors impeding women's entry into higher education management positions. Structural barriers are described with many metaphors such as 'glass ceiling', 'ivory tower', 'glass wall', 'glass cliff', and so on. The glass ceiling is considered 'an invisible but powerful barrier' [11, 631], constituting prejudice and discrimination against women that slow or sometimes block women's advancement [35; 36; 56].

Studies suggest that the gender issue in senior university management manifests itself in the promotion and selection processes. In the development of their academic careers, women face structural obstacles relating to inequalities in the promotion and selection process. For example, Bagilhole and White [9] demonstrated that although female senior managers in Britain and Australia applied for senior posts, they were not short-listed; the reasons given were a shortage of required skills and a preference for males by the male management team. O'Meara and Petzall [42] have asserted that the Australian recruitment and selection processes for vice chancellors' posts are mainly informal, and networking plays a crucial role in these processes. Informal networks are more powerful than formal procedures such

as interviewing and the selection and play an important role in international publishing and research [22]. Bagilhole and Goode [7] have expressed the view that academic success depends on personal contacts, friendships, and cooperative work rather than acting as an individual. Most women are excluded from male networks, and this isolation disadvantages them in terms of 'intellectual and informational exchange' [3, 44], and 'interactions and connections to people of influence in the academic environment' [6, 438]. It is acknowledged that those women in top leadership positions are women who built good relationships with colleagues within and outside their organization. They join and participate in networks that create 'social capital' that benefits them in emotional support, giving advice and information, contacting clients and so on [20, 173]. Moreover, it has been stated that interview panels are male-dominated and sometimes contain discriminatory questions [5; 29]. Therefore, it is suggested that equity in recruitment, and the selection and promotion processes play a key role in getting greater numbers of women into all levels of academic professions.

Poor research performance of women is another institutional obstacle for women entering senior management positions. Scholars note that the strong emphasis on research and publication in academies is not in favor of women [7; 37]. Western studies suggest that research and publication are 'critical indicators' of academic success [22, 23], and these indicators are highly evaluated in promotion processes [45]. Bagilhole [5] claims that research records are key criteria for promotion, and display discrimination towards women because they benefit people who focus on research and publications rather than teaching and counseling and people without domestic responsibilities. It suggests that gender-segregated work – such as women being more involved in teaching, service, and counseling work, compared to men who are in research and publishing – is likely to disadvantage women in reaching positions of leadership. These women's works do not count as merit and are not considered for promotion [28; 39]. Park [43, 232] found evidence that in universities a person with

a high interest in research is ten times more get a chance to occupy a position than a person with a predominant interest in teaching. Moreover, high evaluation of research in promotion prevents many women to apply for the posts of higher ranks, assuming that their poor research performance might be an obstacle to academic advancement [15; 53]. A study of three countries - Australia, South Africa, and Portugal - by White, Carvalho, and Riordan [55] has revealed that it is essential for senior university managers to be actively involved in research and that credible research is valued by university management. These findings indicate that research and publication is the most important factor in career advancement, and, unfortunately, this factor seems to favor men rather than women.

In addition to structural barriers, women are affected by socio-cultural factors, such as their family commitments, and these are also considered as barriers to reaching senior posts in management for women. 'Role conflict' is when women's traditional roles as mothers and wives might conflict with the roles of academic and leader. This conflict may affect promotion opportunities and research productivity for female academics. For instance, Ledwith and Manfredi [33] and Chesterman, Ross-Smith and Peters [14] claim that family and childcare responsibilities are the reasons that promotion and progress up the career ladder happen later in life for women. Morley [36] and Knights and Richards [32] have noted that career breaks taken by women for childbearing and child-rearing are the cause of their poor career progress. Women who have children must decide between family and career. Even though more men are now sharing domestic responsibilities, women's share in childrearing and housework is still huge. More women than men suffer from family responsibilities like 'interrupting their careers, taking more days off, and working part-time' [20, 64]. These interruptions disadvantage women in terms of reduction in the years of job experience and amount of salary, and career success. Despite of these difficulties, most women leaders are trying to balance family and career demands. Most women who hold leadership roles are

those who successfully managed their family responsibilities and jobs.

Other explanations associate the low representation of women at senior levels with a lack of the necessary attributes for managerial roles [17], and insufficient professional qualifications and experience [10]. Hence, if women gain the qualifications and experience needed in building their professional careers, their numbers will increase at the senior management level. This supposition explains why women are seen less in leadership positions. However, other studies contradict the supposition that women are insufficiently qualified and have invested less in education and training than men. Kloot [31] argues that the number of women who gain PhDs has increased in many countries. A study of the UK higher education system by Hantrais [26] has shown that most women have academic work experience spanning significantly long periods. Despite these findings, women are still under-represented in leadership positions. Therefore, qualifications and experience can be expected to play a minor role in women's promotion and career progress.

So far, the literature concerning women, higher education, and power have shown that barriers, such as organizational and socio-cultural ones, towards academic women, still exist. Although there are some contradictory findings on the impact of these obstacles on women's academic careers.

The Aims of the Research and Research Questions

This study is about senior female managers in Kazakhstan's higher education system. The study aims to explore the question concerning the representation of women in senior levels of management at Kazakhstan's universities. This article begins to shed light on this question through an in-depth qualitative study of women in senior leadership positions in higher education in order, firstly, to attain an understanding of both senior female managers' views on women in university leadership roles, and, secondly, to gain an understanding of the phenomenon in

which higher numbers of women are employed in universities but very few reach senior management positions within these institutions.

Two core research questions guided this study:

1. What do you think about the representation of women in senior levels of management, such as rectors, pro-rectors, and deans, at Kazakh universities?

2. Do you think that there are specific factors that affect the representation of females at rectors', pro-rector's, or deans' positions? If so, could you discuss these factors?

The interviewed senior female managers also were asked to talk about how they built their academic careers and arrived at their present posts, the relationship between their academic careers, and personal lives as well.

Data and research methods

A semi-structured interview was used to collect data. The interview was conducted with nine women including seven pro-rectors and two deans. The interviewees were selected from the websites of universities, and a circular email with the invitation to participate in the interview was sent. A consent form was signed before the interviewing process. Before the participants get involved in the interview process, they were aware of the aim and objectives of the research by receiving the information sheet from the researcher. The names of interviewees have been coded and the names of universities are not mentioned. Six women are with a doctorate degree, and three are with a candidate of sciences degree¹. Before becoming pro-rectors and deans at their respective universities the interviewed women held the positions of deans of faculties and heads of departments with a work duration from 6 to 17 years. Their ages ranged from 44 to 58. It should be noted the background of the interviewees is diverse including different regions, disciplines, and universities. The women came from the north, east, south, and central parts of the country, and small and big universities

¹ the first of two doctoral level scientific degrees in many post-Soviet countries

in terms of the subjects taught and student population in. Their subject areas vary from medicine, law, and sport to humanities and social sciences. This diversity might help to identify some cultural and regional characteristics of the country and may exclude the bias towards male- or female-dominated higher institutions as well as the cultural differences of regions. This wide variety of disciplines might preclude the bias towards gendered segregation in subject fields. It should be noted that the interviewees are experienced in university management because the position of rector or pro-rector of a Kazakh university requires at least five-years of work experience in management positions in educational organizations. Deans are also expected to hold at least five years' management position in the organizations of education or working experience in accordance with speciality. The posts of senior managers, except rector's post, are also required to have an academic degree. It is only required to have higher and postgraduate education for rector of Kazakh universities.

Research findings

Academic career of Kazakh senior female managers

To get a sense of perspective on the responses given relating to women and leadership, senior female managers were asked to talk about how they built their academic careers and arrived at their present posts. All interviewees, with one exception, have spent all their professional working lives in higher education and had been awarded academic degrees and titles whilst working in universities. The one exception worked as a headteacher of one secondary school and director of another teaching institution for many years and earned both her candidate of sciences and doctoral degrees whilst working there before being invited to the university. This is considered an uncommon pathway to building an academic career in the Kazakh higher education system. With this one exception, all participants interviewed in this research followed a classic route in their academic careers. This route can be summarised as follows: assistant teacher

Table 1: Background details of participants

Senior manager's code name	Current position	University	Age	Academic title	Years on leadership team	Previous post	Years as pro-rector/ dean
W1	Pro-rector	Private, multi-profile	58	Associate professor, doctor of sciences	16	Director of the Institution	3
W2	Pro-rector	State, pharmaceutical	45	Associate professor, doctor of sciences	15	Dean of the Faculty	7
W3	Pro-rector	State, teaching	50	Associate professor, candidate of sciences	6	Head of the Chair	4
W4	Pro-rector	State with national status, teaching	44	Professor, doctor of sciences	8	Dean of the Faculty	2
W5	Pro-rector	State, Medicine	44	Associate professor, candidate of sciences	7	Head of the Department	1
W6	Pro-rector	State, sport	48	Associate professor, candidate of sciences	8	Dean of the Faculty	2
W7	Pro-rector	Private, law	48	Professor, doctor of sciences	11	Dean of the Faculty	6
W8	Dean	State, multi-profile	55	Professor, doctor of sciences	17	Head of the Chair	7
W9	Dean	Private, multi-profile	44	Associate professor, doctor of sciences	10	Head of the Department	3

followed by a senior teacher, a candidate of sciences degree prior to appointment as associate professor, and finally a doctoral degree prior to appointment as professor. Background details of the interviewees are given below in Table 1.

As we can see from Table 1, age can give an indication of when a woman's career is likely to

make significant progress. Women academics in Kazakhstan gain the higher posts at the age of 40 and above. All participants have at least five years' work experience in middle management, having led faculties, chairs, departments, schools, and institutions before achieving their respective posts of pro-rector or dean. This indicates that

administrative work experience is the most important requirement in such appointments. In contrast to management experience, an academic degree and an academic title evidently provide the flexibility needed to achieve the position of pro-rector or dean. Kazakh female academics can reach the post of pro-rector or dean by previously being an associate professor or candidate of sciences. A doctoral degree is therefore not a prerequisite for the appointment of a candidate to either of these positions. However, it might be said that the universities with national and international standing are considered prestigious and of high status, and hence, at these establishments, academics with doctoral degrees are more preferable.

The other finding from the interview about women's academic careers was that women (and men) in Kazakhstan universities achieve senior posts because of informal promotion and not on the basis of formal competition under the application and selection process. All women interviewed in this research commented that they accepted the posts because they had been offered them by their rectors. After acceptance of the positions, the women took part informal procedures. The following woman's response reflects this experience, though it was mentioned by the rest of the participants as well:

I was invited to this position, and I accepted it. Then I passed the formal procedures. (W1)

I worked as the head of the department, a dean of faculty, and now I am working as a pro-rector. All posts were offered by the President of the Academy. (W6)

It is interesting to note from the conversation with the interviewees that a proposal from the rector is considered more prestigious than 'to offer yourself' for the post, as it implies that the university management team values your work abilities and academic merit. Some interviewees also revealed that they had not felt strong wishes or desires to reach higher ranks of power or to climb the career ladder. The following responses reflect this:

I never thought that I would pursue a career. I am just trying to work honestly, responsibly, and quickly perform assignments given to me. (W5)

I was not looking for positions. They were always offered to me. (W1)

Whether women's inactivity in achieving top university jobs results from barriers in the promotion process or from women's individual psychological characteristics will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Family factors in the academic career of Kazakh women

To discover the relationship between family and career, the interviewed pro-rectors and deans were asked whether their families and children had influenced their academic careers. It is significant that almost all the women interviewed claimed that they built their academic careers with the support of their families, relatives, and children. They highlighted that the support and encouragement of their families allowed them to concentrate on their careers:

My children have always supported me and helped as best they can: in the decision to divorce, career development, and conducting research. (W1)

My children always support me. They help me as far as possible in my academic career. (W3)

My family's influence on the development of my academic career is only positive. My husband helps me in every way. (W2)

I place my family in the first place. My family supports me and help me as far as possible. The spouse is a university teacher and always treats my work with understanding. (W6)

One interviewee has remained unmarried, rejecting the suggestion that this was a result of her concentration on building an academic career:

I am not married officially and have no children. However, I do not think that my career can be 'blamed' for this. Even before I was a professor, I did not want to have children. I think it is something inside me, some psychological characteristics. I have a civil relationship, and there is a mother-in-law in the traditional Kazakh sense. My relatives are happy about my success and have never been an obstacle to my work. (W5)

Two participants mentioned insignificant influences of family on their careers. They reported difficulties in carrying out both the job of raising children and building a career, particularly when their children were small.

I got married and had my older son before I started to pursue my administrative and academic careers. However, a second son experienced all the 'charms' of a working mum, such as early weaning, staying with a babysitter, etc. (W4)

Having children creates temporary difficulties when they are small and when they get sick. (W2)

The impact of family difficulties can be seen as insignificant because family support is strong and provides a strong influence on building an academic career, according to participants.

Only one woman claimed that her career probably had an indirect impact on her personal life.

I believe my career did not directly affect the feasibility of having my own family. Since childhood, I have had leadership skills and inclinations. I married early and gave birth to my first child at the age of 21, the third at 31. At 29, I was deputy headteacher and was appointed headteacher at 35. I started to do my academic degrees after reaching my 40s, although I always wanted to do research. At 41, I divorced - it was my initiative. All the previous 20 years had come to this. Indirectly, perhaps, there was an influence. My attitude of independence, self-sufficiency, and unwillingness to change my own

habits and lifestyle have influenced my decision to not marry again. (W1)

In addition, all participants placed an emphasis on the support and encouragement of their own families. Their parents, brothers, and sisters encourage them morally and personally, helping them with domestic work and expressing pride that they have achieved a successful academic career. The following woman's response reflects this, though it is mentioned by eight others as well:

There is a huge part of my family, parents, brothers, and sisters in my career, who have always supported me morally and financially and given their personal commitment and help to my family and domestic issues. Without their assistance in domestic and family matters, I would not have been able to realize myself fully at work. (W2)

The above responses of the interviewees indicate that family, be it either the woman's own family or her parents and siblings, plays an important role in their academic lives in terms of moral encouragement and personal and physical help. This can be considered a cultural difference, which will be analyzed in detail in the discussion chapter.

Kazakh women in senior university management

The exploration of the perceptions of the women interviewed towards the participation of women in senior levels of university management has revealed a slightly different perspective from the analyzed patterns reported in the literature review chapter. Participants did not claim that Kazakh women represented university management in small numbers, albeit the view of the authors of this research is that they are under-represented at the senior levels of university management. They were more concerned about the possible future of the Kazakh higher education system in terms of the equality of representation of men and women university staff at all levels. The interview responses have

indicated that universities will follow the same pattern as that seen in primary and secondary schools, with overwhelming numbers of female teachers in contrast to shrinking numbers of male teachers.

In higher education, 20 or 30 years in the future, men will be the same as in the system of secondary and primary education... The pendulum of gender issues will go in the opposite direction. Even today, we feel the fruits of female upbringing in the family and the school. (W1)

The question of the representation of women in university management raises another issue of gender relating to segregation in subject fields. In Kazakhstan education, as in many countries, academic disciplines can be considered as 'feminine' and 'masculine'. As we discussed earlier, Kazakh women overwhelmingly represent two main areas of education and employment: teaching and medicine. The above and following comments of the interviewees provide evidence to support this:

In general, women dominate in leadership positions, such as heads of chairs and departments. However, it should be noted that the proportion of women among all those working in the medical and teaching fields is greater than men. If the country is looked at, the number of chief executives who are women is insufficient. (W5)

Almost all interviewees noted that women dominate at all levels of management in the medical and teaching universities. For instance, one woman from a state medical university commented that there is gender balance in her university because two women and two men provide equal representation in the posts of pro-rector (W5). A pro-rector of one private university, which is oriented towards multiple disciplines, commented that five pro-rectors represent her university, three of them being women. Among 15 heads of the chair, there are four men (W1). However, all interviewees agreed on the fact that few women occupy the post of

rector. Some interviewees reported that women are significantly represented not only in middle management but also at the senior management level, particularly for the post of pro-rector. The interviewee, however, did not provide strong evidence to support this claim. On the other hand, the researchers could not also find official statistical evidence for this assertion, except the researchers' own data. According to the researchers' own investigation of the websites of Kazakhstan universities, 13 higher education institutions out of 125 are led by women in 2017. The number of female pro-rectors is also less than their counterparts. 42 women compared to 91 men represent pro-rectors of universities with a national and state status in the country. Joint-stock companies (universities) have 19 women out of 50 on their boards of pro-rectors, while 70 out of 152 pro-rectors are women at private universities.

The research aimed to discover the possible factors that affect women's participation in higher posts of management. Personal and cultural factors have been identified during the interview. One woman noted that personal characteristics, such as professionalism, competence, and the ability to publicly defend personal opinions, play a role in reaching higher posts (W4). A similar point was made by another pro-rector, and it is mentioned by three other senior managers:

First, women are not ready psychologically to strive for the highest positions of power. Many prefer to stay in the shadows of men in work and family. Second, women themselves do not want women leaders, because many women leaders can be petty. Third, the men in high posts mainly prefer to work with men, not with women, so they do not want to admit openly the ability of women. (W3)

One of the factors is that many husbands do not want that their wives are in a higher status than their own status; therefore, they hinder their advancement. There is also another opinion that husbands of women bosses are 'henpecked'. Many think that women earn a high position through other ways etc... and such stereotypes

prevent many women from climbing the career ladder. (W8)

The above responses indicate that there are psychological and cultural barriers that might affect women's career development. It also confirmed the survey's finding that women themselves want to work with a male boss [23].

Another factor revealed in the interview is that of 'the ties of kinship'. Although this is a common traditional Kazakh way of getting jobs with the highest ranks, only two women commented on this issue:

Kinship in Kazakh culture plays an important role and, apparently, it will still be one of the determinants of job placement. It is no secret that children and sons-in-law of former well-known bosses of the party are now the heads of national corporations and prestigious organizations. Not always, unfortunately, do leaders pay attention to the qualifications and competence of staff. (W4)

In addition, the interview revealed that many women do not want to occupy senior positions because these jobs are too much hard work. Working as a pro-rector or dean in bureaucratic universities is becoming quite stressful and difficult. The comments of the women interviewed supported it: "...in the time of when the Ministry of Education aims to control and manage any and everything, and in which paperwork is increasing, women leaders are more applicable" (W1). It is a contribution of private time and life: "not all women would like to commit their private lives to work which is of a high emotional load and responsibility" (W5). Other women pro-rectors also highlighted some disadvantages of top positions, such as a full return to work, a high level of stress, and little time for a personal life (W6, W7).

Some pro-rectors and deans have not observed any barriers that would prevent women from entering higher positions of leadership in Kazakh universities. One woman excluded both structural and socio-cultural barriers:

There is no government, and there are no laws and regulations, or organizational factors that

could prevent the admission of women to high positions. For the period of 2012, among five female pro-rectors, four had a family or children. Now we comprise three women, two of whom have a family and children. Thereby, I wanted to show that family and children for women pro-rectors are not a hindrance. Regarding top positions, in the system of medical education, there is a successful example of a woman rector of a large state university. (W5)

The interview findings suggest that individual and cultural factors have an impact on the occupying top jobs. However, according to most interviewees, structural barriers do not exist for women in Kazakh universities.

Analysis and Discussions

Women's participation in senior university management

Because this research has mainly concentrated on the representation of women in senior management teams, it has sought to discover the factors which might explain why women are under-represented at the highest levels of management in universities. The findings of this research, which are supported by other studies in this area, have identified the existing obstacles that prevent women from entering higher posts in academies. The main barriers for Kazakh women in universities are structural and socio-cultural.

The interviews have shown that most participants excluded structural barriers as one way of preventing of women's career development. However, it should be noted that forms of organizational barriers exist in Kazakh universities. The responses of all the interviewees indicated that there is no open competition for the posts of pro-rector and dean in the academies. The appointments, which are made solely based on the decisions of rectors, without open selection or application processes, exclude many women from the opportunities to occupy senior posts and rise up the career ladder. A few women, who are lucky to have the proposals of rectors, can reach higher levels of power, whereas most women are not so fortunate and remain at

middle management levels. Issues in the granting of appointments have also been seen in UK universities, where the appointment is often made without an open selection process [9]. However, the difference between these countries lies in the fact that there was no open selection process at all in Kazakhstan for the posts described. If we take into consideration the fact that women occupy most middle management positions at Kazakh universities, it might be the case that a significant number of women will not have the opportunity to advance their careers. The occupation by some women in this research of the pro-rector's or deans' post for more than seven years has partly exemplified that these positions would be the highest steps for these women on the academic career ladder.

Another factor identified from the interviews regarding the imbalance of men and women in the higher posts relates to women themselves. Women's individual characteristics play an important role in their career development. Scholars found gender differences in motivation and aspiration to work. Women are less likely to commit to work and less interested in career advancement than their counterparts [40]. According to Hennig and Jardim [27], women's lower aspirations and interest in careers might result from sex-differentiated perceptions of 'career': women view their careers as a way of showing their dedication and competence, while men may view careers as planned steps to power. Even though Acker [1] argues that the 'blaming the victim' model is a 'simplistic version of conceptualization' (138), it may not exclude the influence of the personal characteristics of women academics in the building of their careers. Therefore, women who made successful careers in male-dominated environments may be referred to as 'queen bees' [21] and may have been criticized for not being supportive of other women, and not recognizing any of the barriers and discrimination experienced by other women, because in their view everything is achievable if a woman is strong individually [6].

The interviews with Kazakh senior female managers have revealed that they are less likely to promote themselves compared to men.

Women's lack of self-promotion is considered one of the social barriers to entering academic management. The findings chapter discussed this issue regarding women participants who held the positions of pro-rector and dean; they had simply accepted the offers of the posts, as they had no more personal steps to achieve. This research underpins the findings of other research in this area: that women are still not strong at presenting themselves, even though they have good academic records and merit [14]. Women display less willingness to push themselves forward for promotion. Most women believe that their academic merit, work, and commitment will be 'recognized and rewarded' by university authorities without any attempts to advertise themselves [7, 169]. It is 'a misguided faith', according to scholars (ibid). In addition, it indicates women's lack of awareness and restricted knowledge about gender equity in the developing world. Most women academics from developed countries are more aware of and sure about how to act to promote themselves, due to the growing informal feminist networks and the vast amount of research published in this area. It is reasonable to support the point of Leonard (1994) that many talented women were late and missed their 'crucial career stages' due to a 'lack of sponsorship, guidance, and support' at the time that they needed it [38, 125]. Playing the 'rules of the game' is described in the literature as one of the strategies for women who want to enter the decision-making levels of university management. Women are not good at playing this game, and hence it seems 'to privilege men and disadvantage women' [7, 167]. Women's absence in the highest positions of power was due to a lack of knowledge about the rules of the game. Studies have suggested that playing the rules of the game, rather than blaming the system in which they work, would help most women to advance [38]. Therefore, self-promotion is important to women in their attempts to build a successful academic career.

One barrier for women academics highlighted in the gender-related literature about women in higher education is that of family and children. In the attempt to understand the reasons why the

women interviewed discounted the influence of family on their careers, this research has concluded that, in the context of family and career, culture plays a key role in Kazakhstan. Two factors, related to families and family networks need to be considered. First, most Kazakh families are extended, including parents and in-laws. The one reason why women interviewed did not complain about the difficulties of raising children relates to their family networks. Kazakh women receive huge support for childcare from their mothers, mothers-in-law, and other extended family members, as well as from grown-up children; this was mentioned by eight interviewees in this research. Moreover, as one interviewee reported, they could hire help such as nannies to care for their children if family support was unavailable. Western studies place a greater emphasis on the notion that university is created as a 'carefree zone' where only professional activity is important [34, 63], a senior manager is regarded as a 'zero-load' employee avoiding family-related responsibilities, and women academics are considered as individuals 'who navigate between parental and employee roles, and it is therefore only women who pay the "toll" for crossing the boundary between work and family [46, 240]. This research did not provide such evidence to support these claims. Instead, a positive relationship between an extended family and women's careers and women's reliance on family networks was established. Dependence on family networks is also considered as one of the key success factors for the academic careers of Turkish women [4]. Complementary to this, Adler [2] found that family support is crucial in the academic careers of Asian women:

However, seeking help from an employer to reduce the time demands of managing a household and caring for children is not as critical or as important in Asia as it is, for example, in North America. In Asia, unlike in North America, almost all senior women managers have the assistance of live-in household help and an extended family, as well as having grown-up children. (13)

Therefore, family is unlikely to cause the under-representation of Kazakh women in academics at the highest levels of higher education management. In addition, the finding suggests that the women interviewed built a successful career because they were free from domestic and family responsibilities due to family networks. This provides evidence for the finding of Wajcman [54, 40] that 'to succeed in the workplace on the same terms as men, senior women managers are contracting out their domestic work'.

A final factor identified from the interviews is the heavy workload that might discourage many women from occupying these posts. At a time of financial recession, universities are becoming the places where academics must work more for less [18, 240]. The senior female managers interviewed pointed out the fact that women are more and more involved at the senior management level because they are more likely to cope with the highest level of bureaucratic paperwork. The comments of one woman and the other five managers supported this: "...at the time of when the Ministry of Education aims to control everything and manage of all, and with increasing paperwork, women leaders are more acceptable" (W1). To be a leader means to contribute more of your private time and life to work. Western studies suggest that a successful career in any bureaucratic organization means hard work and commitment to the employing organization [16]. Similar findings are noted in a study of senior managers from universities in eight countries, revealing that the disadvantages of being senior managers are 'sacrificing research time for management responsibilities' and 'a loss of social and private lives and freedom' [45, 127-128]. Peterson [44] also argues that senior managers' roles in universities are becoming more complex and more overloaded with work and time-consuming bureaucratic tasks. It would seem to be true that 'academic management had become a separate career track in academia parallel to the research track and the teaching track' [44, 625], and senior managers have become the key workers of the academies [19]. The higher the posts, the higher the intensity and workload, and this consequently may discourage many women from aspiring to positions of power.

Conclusion

The interview results with Kazakh women working in the higher levels of university management revealed that there are similarities and differences with other countries in the academic careers of women and their representation in senior management. The career pathway for women in academics was similar with women in western countries, indicating that most women, with few exceptions, have worked for long years in the system of higher education and reached their career peak at the age of 40. The administrative experience rather than academic credentials is highly valued in promotion and selection to the senior posts of Kazakhstani universities. The interviewed women did not consider that women are under-represented in senior management in Kazakhstan universities. In contrast, they worried that Kazakhstan's higher education system will be feminized. However, the numbers of women in the posts of rectors and pro-rectors suggest that they are under-represented. Structural barriers have been seen in selection and appointment processes.

Women can occupy the posts of pro-rectors and deans without doctoral degrees. However, there is an impediment for women that no formal open competition exists for these positions. There is little chance for women academics in middle management to rise the career ladder because they are unable to apply for senior positions in management. The research concluded that scarcity of time for private life (while working as pro-rectors or deans a demanding and time-consuming job, senior managers must sacrifice themselves to universities that many academic women might not choose) might block the interest of many Kazakh women to advance their careers. The personal characteristics of women play a significant role in raising their careers. Women are not strong at self-promotion compared to men. This research has found a positive link between family and the academic careers of women. The Kazakh women interviewed have built a successful academic career due to family networks. This culture has a considerable influence on women's career development and advancement.

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Г. Ә. Сәрсекес¹, Кийонг Бён²

¹*А.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Нұр-Сұлтан, Қазақстан*

²*Корея университеті, Сеул, Оңтүстік Корея*

Қазақстан университеттеріндегі жоғары менеджменттегі әйелдердің өкілдігі

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада жоғары оқу орындарының жоғары басшылығында әйелдердің өкілдігі Қазақстандағы тоғыз жоғары басшы әйел менеджермен сапалық сұхбат арқылы талданған. Осы саладағы зерттеулер әйелдердің университетті басқарудың жоғары сатыларына өтуіне ұйымдық және әлеуметтік-мәдени кедергілер бар екенін көрсетеді. Қазақ әйелдерімен жүргізілген сұхбат нәтижелері әйелдердің академиялық мансабында және олардың жоғары басшылықта өкілдік етуінде басқа елдермен ұқсастықтары мен айырмашылықтары бар екенін көрсетті. Қазақстандық респонденттер, құрылымдық кедергілердің бар болуына қарамастан, әйелдердің академиялық мансапты жоғарылатуда құрылымдық кедергілерге тап болады деп ойламайды. Олар сондай-ақ қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындарының жоғары басшылық лауазымдарында және профессор-оқытушылық құрамында ерлердің басым болуы туралы пікір білдірмеді. Керісінше, қазақстандық сұхбат берушілер қазіргі уақытта республиканың орта және бастауыш білім беру мектептерінде байқалатындай, қазақстандық жоғары білім беру жүйесінің де феминизациялану ықтималдығын мойындады. Әңгімелесушілердің көпшілігі отбасылық қолдауды қазақстандық әйелдердің мансаптық өсуінің мәдени факторы деп санайды.

Түйін сөздер: аға менеджер, әйел, академиялық мансап, жоғары білім, Қазақстан, университет.

Г. А. Сарсеке¹, Кийонг Бён²

¹*Евразийский национальный университет им. А.Н. Гумилева, Нур-Султан, Казахстан*

²*Корейский университет, Сеул, Южная Корея*

Представительство женщин в высшем руководстве университетов Казахстана

Аннотация. В данной статье анализируется представленность женщин в высшем руководстве высших учебных заведений посредством качественного интервью с девятью старшими женщинами-менеджерами в Казахстане. Исследования в этой области показывают, что существуют организационные и социокультурные препятствия на пути перехода женщин на более высокие уровни управления университетом. Результаты интервью с казахстанскими женщинами показали, что существуют сходства и различия с другими странами в академической карьере женщин и их представительстве в высшем руководстве. Респонденты из Казахстана в большинстве своем не считают, что, несмотря на наличие структурных барьеров, женщины сталкиваются с препятствиями структурного характера на пути продвижения своей академической карьеры. Они также не комментировали преобладание мужчин на высших руководящих должностях и среди профессорско-преподавательского состава казахстанских университетов. Напротив, казахстанские респонденты признали вероятность феминизации казахстанской системы высшего образования, которая в настоящее время наблюдается в средних и начальных школах страны. Большинство собеседников рассматривают поддержку семьи как культурный фактор карьерного роста казахстанских женщин.

Ключевые слова: старший менеджер, женщина, академическая карьера, высшее образование, Казахстан, университет.

Information about authors:

Sarseke G.A. – Corresponding author, Ph.D., Acting Professor of the Department of Kazakh Linguistics, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, 2 Satpayev str., Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan.

Kiyong Byun – Ph. D., Professor and Chair of the Department of Education, Director of Higher Education Policy Research Institute of Korea University, 145 Anam-ro, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, South Korea.

Сәрсеке Г.Ә. – корреспонденция үшін автор, Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университетінің қазақ тіл білімі кафедрасының профессоры м.а., филология ғылымдарының кандидаты, тіл білімінің доценті, Сәтпаев көш., 2, Нұр-Сұлтан, Қазақстан.

Кийонг Бён – Корей университетінің педагогика кафедрасының меңгерушісі және профессоры, Жоғары білім саясаты ғылыми-зерттеу институтының директоры, Ph.D., 145 Anam-ro, Сеонгбук-гу, Сеул, Оңтүстік Корея.