

Investigating factors influencing women's inclination in adopting managerial positions in Iranian higher education

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of multiple roles, leadership aspiration and Organizational Barriers on women's inclination in adopting managerial positions in Iranian universities.

Survey data were collected from 135 women faculty members in top Ten Iranian Universities. Structural equation modeling was used to examine the hypothesized model, and hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the interaction effects.

It was found that faculties' career role salience is positively related to their leadership aspiration and faculties' perceived work-family conflict is negatively related to their leadership aspiration. Lower levels of leadership aspiration, in turn, resulted in faculties' inclination in adopting managerial positions. In addition, the effect of career role salience on leadership aspiration was found to be moderated by family role salience. So the positive relationship between career role salience and leadership aspiration will be stronger for employees with lower family role salience, compared to those with higher family role salience.

Moreover, the effect of leadership aspiration on faculties' inclination in adopting managerial positions was found to be moderated by perceived organizational barriers. So the negative relationship between leadership aspiration and women's inclination in adopting managerial positions will be stronger for faculties who have higher perception of organizational barriers, compared to those with lower perception of organizational barriers.

Key Words: Work-Family Conflict, Leadership Aspiration, Organizational Barriers, Career Role Salience, Family Role Salience

1. Introduction

The extended under representation of women in academia, particularly in positions of leadership has long been recognized (Idrissi & Prietto, 2009). Gender issues have been acknowledged as inherent to the academic field (Chesterman, Ross-Smith & Peters, 2003; Probert, 2005). Moreover, gender inequalities in Higher Education are spread across countries and continents (Idrissi & Prietto, 2009). For example, Although the percentage of women in the academic profession (at all levels) has grown in Iran in the last 30 years, research still shows that only 5% of the managerial positions are held by women faculty members in top Ten Iranian Universities (Afghahi, 2009).

Much has been written to identify and analyse the causes of the significance under representation of women at senior and leadership levels of organisations, including universities. And all over the world, legislative and programmatic structures have been put into place both to dismantle the barriers to gender equality in organisations

and to counteract their negative effects. The intransigence of the barriers preventing the achievement of equality between men and women at the highest levels of organisations, despite the widespread efforts to dismantle them, is itself challenging accepted explanations of the causes and commonly held assumptions about the remedies to this enduring gender based inequality in organisations of all types throughout the world.

Most recently, analysis of this issue in universities has focussed on the considerable difference between the context of overall opportunities in which women work and pursue their careers and that experienced by their male colleagues. Two distinct differences in these gendered opportunity contexts have been isolated as particularly pertinent: women's unequal share of domestic and particularly child rearing responsibilities and organizational barriers such as men's greater access to mentoring, sponsorship and patronage through informal systems of information and other career advantaging benefits (Ramsay, 2005)

Lifestyle choices and family roles have been identified as a potential explanation for women's lack of advancement in academia (Wolfinger, Mason & Goulden, 2008). Specifically, reproductive roles and family obligations of female academics have been put forth as explanations for lower and slower advancement.

Beyond the issues of work-family conflict and family choices, access to information and knowledge on promotion procedures is still problematic and therefore negatively affects women's career choices further slowing their promotion and progress through faculty ranks (Fox & Colatrella, 2006). Because promotion criteria are indirectly linked to collegiality and informal networking and because women have more difficulties in entering the circles of academic power (Gholipour et al., 2012), women are hence in a particularly sticky place.

In sum, the alarming under representation of women in leading positions in academia can probably be explained by a combination of the different reasons such as factors related to women faculties' multiple roles (career and family role salience and work-family conflict), perceived Organizational barriers and leadership aspiration.

So the objective of this study is to investigate the impact of multiple roles, leadership aspiration and perceived Organizational Barriers on women's inclination in adopting managerial positios in Iranian universities.

2.Hypothesized model of study

2.1.Leadership Aspiration

Women's leadership development has focused on building skills rather than identifying factors that influence women's career aspirations to leadership roles. Although the literature reflects the knowledge, skills and abilities of leadership, the psychological factor(s), (affective and cognitive), that inspire an individual to leadership are unclear (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). According to Boatwright and Egidio (2003), many college experiences provide the necessary skills for leadership skill development, but have not explicitly focused on the enlivening of leadership aspirations, a necessary element for many women (Harvey, 2007).

Leadership aspiration is defined as a measure of intrinsic career inspiration or motivation for becoming a leader and pursuing opportunities (Booth, 2005). Stimulation of women's leadership aspirations may be critical in the career advancement of women to leadership roles(Harvey, 2007).

So far, little research has been conducted to explore the possibility that one contributor of women's inclination in adopting managerial positios may be low leadership aspiration.

Thus, in this research, the contribution of leadership aspiration to women's inclination in adopting managerial positios is examined.

H1: leadership aspiration is negatively related to women's inclination in adopting managerial positios.

2.2. Organizational Barriers

Shanon (2007) and Vanhook (2003) reported that the women faculties identified a wide range of barriers they had encountered on the pathway to the presidency. Some felt that society's stereotypes about women meant that women had to be over-prepared for their positions. Women also expressed frustration because of the difficulty of becoming accepted in the "old boys' network," and they perceived discrimination in their advancement up the career ladder.

they found that “a ‘double standard’ is applied to some women presidents, whereby they are expected to accomplish more than their male colleagues”.

In Iran, there are many barriers that women have not found themselves in significant numbers as leaders within higher education. For example, Zahedi (2002) listed several factors that have made it difficult for women to assume leadership positions. First and foremost, the long history of “patriarchal leadership (leadership that is male-dominated and normed on male standards) often results in masculine norms perpetuated throughout institutional structure and culture.”

Most of Iranian Research show that Organizational culture is the most important barrier to women seeking access to higher education leadership positions (Zahedi, 2002, Aghapour et al., 2009, janalizadeh et al., 2008).

In light of the research on the negative impact of organizational barriers on women’s inclination in adopting managerial positions, it is likely that the negative relationship between leadership aspiration and women’s inclination in adopting managerial positions will be influenced by perception of organizational barriers.

Thus, it is hypothesized that leadership aspiration and organizational barriers will interactively affect women’s inclination in adopting managerial positions.

H2: The negative relationship between leadership aspiration and women’s inclination in adopting managerial positions will be stronger for faculties who have higher perception of organizational barriers, compared to those with lower perception of organizational barriers.

2.3. Career & family role salience

Role theory stipulates that individuals’ identities are comprised of multiple roles, each with varying salience for that individual. As a role becomes more salient for an individual, it becomes more important to fulfill demands of that role (Hogg et al., 1995).

For some individuals, work will be more salient, while for others family will be more salient. Still others may have high salience for both work and family domains. A salient aspect of our lives serves as a gauge of self esteem or self-evaluation, in that positive self-esteem depends upon successful fulfillment of this salient domain. Thus if career is highly salient for a woman who is working fulltime, then she would be motivated to pursue a career, with her emotional, mental, and physical energy and resources. The level of importance of career in one’s life is defined as career salience. Career salience has also been viewed as synonymous with career commitment and professional commitment (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005).

The notion of career or work centrality to one’s life was highlighted by London (1983) in the sub-domains of the actual level of work involvement, both psychologically and physically, and the desire for upward mobility. Within this framework, London theorized that individuals espousing a high career salience would consequently place more value on career satisfaction than on satisfaction from other areas in life. As well, he proposed that a high career salience would necessitate making sacrifices and delaying gratification in other areas of life such as family (Hatchman, 2009)

Past research has provided some evidence that career role salience may enhance leadership aspiration (Hatchman, 2009, Marks & Houston, 2002, Nauta et al., 1998). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H3 : career role salience is positively related to leadership aspiration.

While it is likely that career role salience will create high levels of leadership aspiration, An important factor that may influence this relationship is one’s attitudes towards family or family role salience. Family role salience is a variable that describes the value an individual places on family-related pursuits (Raiff, 2004).

While women who have high career role salience may have high leadership aspiration, for those who are highly committed to family role, the influence of career role commitment may be less salient. Thus, it is hypothesized that career role salience and family role salience will interactively affect leadership aspiration.

H4: The positive relationship between career role salience and leadership aspiration will be stronger for employees with lower family role salience, compared to those with higher family role salience.

2.4. Work/family Conflict

In the last twenty years, the changing face of the workforce has increased the amount of research looking at how people manage the demands of both work and family. With both professional and

Personal responsibilities, women in particular are faced with a significant challenge when reconciling these demands. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work/family conflict as “a form of friction in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects”. Research suggests that people will spend more time engaged in roles that are most important to them, therefore leaving less time for other roles, which increases the opportunity for the person to experience role conflict (Henessy, 2007).

Shanon (2007) and Vanhook (2003) reported that some of the women felt that taking time off to have children and to perform child-rearing responsibilities inhibited their career development. Some also indicated a lack of spousal support in moving to a new location or changing their own careers to support the wife’s career.

Empirical support has been found for a negative relationship between work-family conflict perception and Leadership aspiration (O’Brien, 2000, Farmer et al., 1998, Janalizadeh et al., 2008, Javaheri & Dariapour, 2008).

Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H5 : work-family conflict is negatively related to Leadership aspiration.

the study framework is based on these 5 hypotheses. Figure 1 presents the hypothesized model of this study.

Insert Figure 1

3. Methods

3.1. Research Setting and Data Collection Procedure

The hypothesized model was tested in a field setting. Data were collected from a random sample of women faculty members in top Ten Iranian Universities (Tehran University, Sharif University of Technology, Amirkabir University of Technology, Shahid Beheshti University, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran Science and Industry University, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Isfahan University of Technology, Shiraz University and Tabriz University). Based on the contact information obtained from the universities’ websites, survey instrument was mailed to respondents in March 2012.

The faculty population sample of women was 453 in which 135 faculties completed and returned the survey instrument. Returned surveys from only one mailing yielded a sufficient 30 percent response rate to conduct the research.

Respondents included Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Full Professors within the average age range of 29-58 years old and they were in various disciplines in social sciences, humanities, engineering and business.

3.2. Measures

Faculties’ leadership aspiration was measured by 4 items adopted from leadership aspiration scale developed by O’Brien(1996). The degree to which faculties perceive work-family conflict was measured by 12 selected items from the work-family conflict scales developed by copelman et al.(1983) and Carlson et al.(2000). Amatea’s (1986) career and family role salience scale was used to measure career and family role salience. 10 items from family role salience scale and 4 items from career role salience scale were adopted to measure faculties’ family and career role salience.

To measure faculties’ perceptions of organizational barriers and their inclination in adopting managerial positions, a 16-item scale and a 2-item scale were developed in this study.

3.3. Analysis

3.3.1. Analytic Procedure

To test the hypothesized model, data were analyzed through a combination of two analytic procedures. The path model containing the direct effects was examined via structural equation modeling using lisrel program (lisrel 8.50, Joreskog, K., & Sorborm, D., 1993), and the interaction effects tested via moderated hierarchical regression using SPSS.

To run the structural model, a correlation matrix containing the appropriate variables and the standard deviations of those variables generated using SPSS were imported into lisrel. The lisrel program then generated the covariance matrix, which is used to estimate the model.

Following the recommendation of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), two-stage analysis was used, in which the measurement model was first confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis, and then structural equation modeling was performed based on the measurement model to estimate the fit of the hypothesized model to the data.

3.3.2. Assessment of Interaction Effects

To examine the role of family role salience as a moderator of the relationship between career role salience and leadership aspiration and the role of perceived organizational barriers as a moderator of the relationship between leadership aspiration and inclination in adopting managerial positions, moderated multiple regression analysis was used. Hierarchical regression allows the researcher to arrange the order of entry of variables based on causal priority, and is one of the most useful tools for assessing interaction effects (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). This procedure enables the partitioning of the unique variance explained by the interaction term above and beyond those accounted for by the main effects.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

In Table 1, a summary of the means, standard deviations, and inter-item reliabilities for all the variables in the model is provided. As can be seen, the scale reliabilities (shown in parentheses) for all these variables exceeded the value of 0.7. Thus, the instruments used in this study provide reliable measures of the variables of interest.

4.2. Measurement Model

The confirmatory factor analysis suggested a good fit for the measurement model: $\chi^2/df = 0.27$, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) = 0.91, Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = 0.8, Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) = 0.05, Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.0.

4.3. Structural Model

Structural modeling results suggested that the Hypothesized Model fit the data well: $\chi^2/df = 1.37$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.98, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) = 0.91, Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = 0.97, Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) = 0.06, Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.05.

Insert Table 1

4.4. Hypotheses Testing for Structural Model

all the hypothesized relationships were supported based on the structural modeling results. The path estimates for the hypothesized model are shown in Figure 2.

Hypothesis 1, which predicted a negative relationship between leadership aspiration and women's inclination in adopting managerial positions, was strongly supported ($\beta = -0.93, p < .001$).

Consistent with Hypothesis 3, career role salience was also found to have a significant positive relationship with leadership aspiration ($\beta = .27, p < .001$).

Supporting Hypothesis 5, work-family conflict perception was also found to be a significant predictor of Low leadership aspiration ($\beta = -0.38, p < .05$).

In accordance with Hypothesis 6, work-family conflict self efficacy was found to be negatively associated with work-family conflict perception ($\beta = -0.75, p < .001$).

Insert Figure 2

4.5. Moderating Effects of family role salience and perceived organizational barriers

The moderated hierarchical regression results are summarized in Tables 2 and 3. It can be seen that career role salience and family role salience had significant interaction effects on leadership aspiration.

Consistent with Hypothesis 4, there was a significant interaction effect of career role salience and family role salience on leadership aspiration ($\beta = 0.26, p < .001$).

A significant moderating effect of perceived organizational barriers on the leadership aspiration- inclination in adopting managerial positions (Hypothesis 2) was also found ($\beta = -0.71, p < .001$).

Insert Table 2

Insert Table 3

5. Conclusion

This research intended to investigate the impact of multiple roles, leadership aspiration and perceived Organizational Barriers on women's inclination in adopting managerial positions in top 10 Iranian universities.

For investigating the impact of multiple roles, It is hypothesized that faculties' low career role salience and high perceived work-family conflict will decrease their leadership aspiration, which in turn, will lead to their inclination in adopting managerial positions. Further, it is proposed that faculties' family role salience will interact with career role salience to influence their leadership aspiration.

As expected, it was found that faculties' career role salience is positively related to their leadership aspiration ($r=0.27$) and faculties' perceived work-family conflict is negatively related to their leadership aspiration ($r=-0.38$). lower levels of leadership aspiration, in turn, resulted in faculties' inclination in adopting managerial positions ($r=-0.93$). In addition, the effect of career role salience on leadership aspiration was found to be moderated by family role salience. So the positive relationship between career role salience and leadership aspiration is stronger for employees with lower family role salience, compared to those with higher family role salience.

Mean score Findings, shows that in comparison to family role salience (mean=4.04), female academics' career role salience (mean=2.67) is relatively low. Moreover, their perception from work-family conflict (mean=3.53) in case of engagement in managerial responsibility is relatively high.

These results indicated that Family is of central importance to the women faculties in this study and the majority of them prioritize family over career. High family role salience reflects a deeply embedded belief in Iranian culture that work is peripheral to women's lives. Women are essentialised in a patriarchal discourse that presumes domesticity and motherhood.

These results are consistent with other research that found that women, when identifying their values, commitments, and participation in life roles, prioritize home life over work life regardless of work status (Claes et al., 1995) and specifically planned to limit their future career to accommodate child-raising (Arnold, 1993).

highly meaningful role of motherhood and the cultural force of gender role expectations that shape those definitions of meaning, may be a major factor that contributes to women's decisions to limit their career development and to their low leadership aspiration.

Although it was found that faculties' career role salience is positively related to their leadership aspiration, but low correlation between these two variables may indicate that Woman faculties' career role salience is reflected in their preferring to stay in direct contact with students or their own research not in adopting managerial positions.

The negative relationship between perceived work-family conflict and leadership aspiration indicate that Women faculties' low leadership aspiration can be explained by the stress caused by role-conflict, as family responsibilities and women's worries about balancing increased work demands at the expense of family, impact on their leadership aspiration.

Although the tensions and conflict between work and family might be universal, the organizational contexts appear to play an important role in the level of conflict and the factors that give rise to that conflict. Critical to academic promotion criteria is the emphasis that may be placed on research strength. Women academics in general have less opportunity for research and publication due to family commitments. In addition, because of their greater involvement in childrearing women may be confronted with structural impediments such as difficulty to travel abroad to colloquiums or research sabbaticals.

Moreover, masculine work habits are still the norm at senior levels in universities. Universities have traditionally organised academic careers based on the male life patterns making it more difficult for women to advance their careers while building a family. as the long hours culture becomes "the norm" in university settings, academics are increasingly likely to feel the tensions between work and family life, and the work-family culture that prevails in academia is unlikely to make things easier for faculty members, particularly women, trying to balance the job requirements and the demands of family life.

Consistent with hypothesis 2, the effect of leadership aspiration On faculties' inclination in adopting managerial positions was found to be moderated by perceived organizational barriers. So the negative relationship between leadership aspiration and women's inclination in adopting managerial positions is stronger for faculties who have higher perception of organizational barriers, compared to those with lower perception of organizational barriers.

In this study Faculty members perceiving that barriers existed for women seeking upper level administrative positions were most likely to have no intention to seek a future administrative position. This result indicates that some women who are considered highachievers and have high leadership aspiration are not necessarily motivated to serve in a managerial role.

In sum, though the majority of women faculty (69%) in this study indicated that they would not seek an administrative position, the fact remains that there are others who indicated interest in advancing their careers.

The existence of gross under representation of women is detrimental to higher education; it limits diversity and potential contributions by a group of individuals. Further, the exclusion of talented and qualified women who aspire to top leadership positions is costly to universities. Discrimination eliminates potential leaders and their contributions in meeting the vision and goals of higher learning institutions.

This study offers empirical data that will, hopefully, affect and inspire decisionmaking relative to the advancement of qualified women to administration positions at Iranian universities. It is also desired that these institutions be inclusive of women who aspire to achieve in the university administration arena. Consideration should also be made of the importance of family friendly culture in universities to alleviate serious home/work challenges for women who would consider the additional responsibilities of management.

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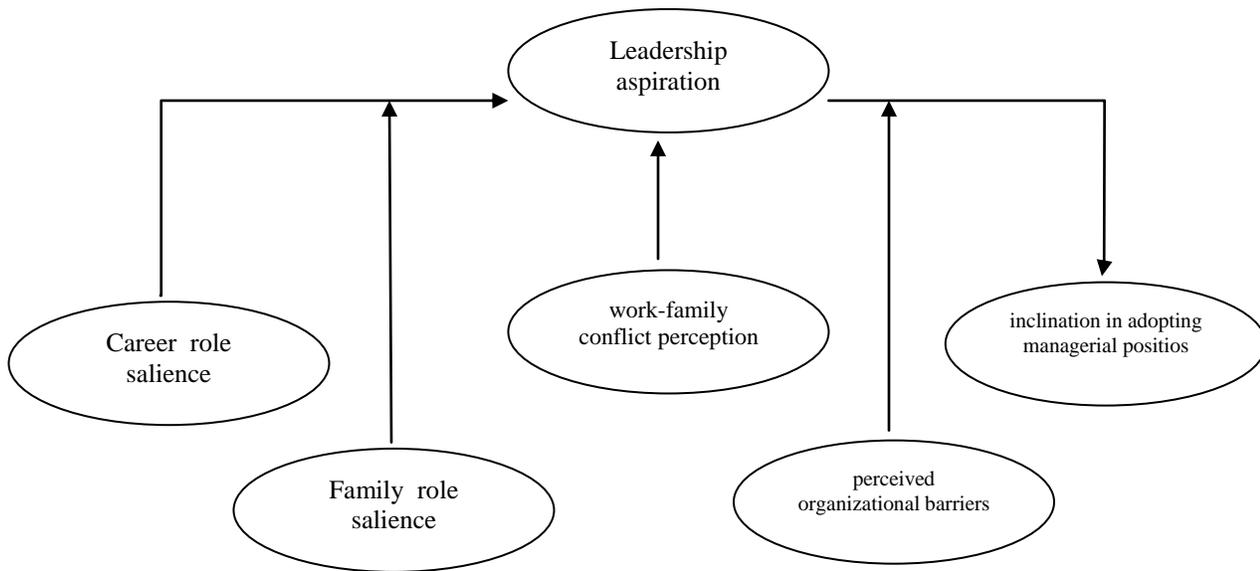


Figure 1. Hypothesized model of study

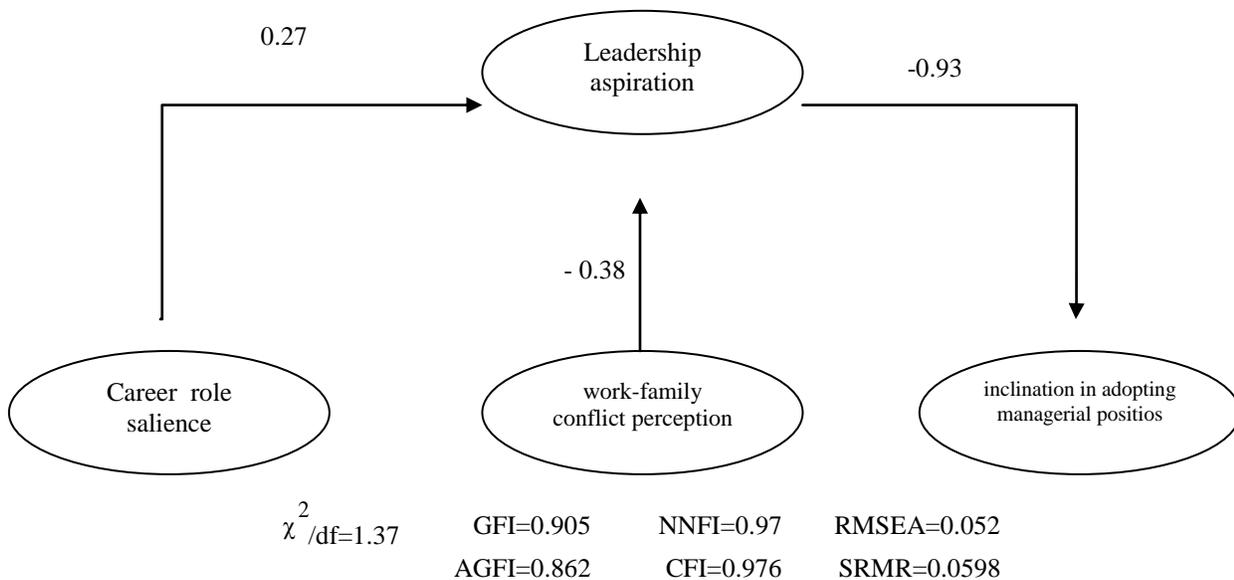


Figure 2. Structural Model Results for the Hypothesized Model

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Family role salience	Career role salience	work-family conflict perception	perception of organizational barriers	Leadership aspiration	inclination in adopting managerial positios
Family role salience	4.04	0.77	(0.87)					
Career role salience	2.67	0.99	-0.02	(0.75)				
work-family conflict perception	3.53	0.95	0.1	0.01	(0.93)			
perceived organizational barriers	3.48	0.78	-0.04	0.1	-0.02	(0.89)		
Leadership aspiration	2.78	1.24	0.03	0.29	-0.3	0.19	(0.88)	
inclination in adopting managerial positios	3.41	1.26	0.02	-0.07	0.35	-0.13	-0.78	(0.83)

Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) are shown in parentheses

Table 2. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Moderating Effects of family role salience on the career role salience - leadership aspiration Relationship

	leadership aspiration	
	β	t
step 1		
Career role salience	0.29	3.41
Family role salience	0.04	0.49
step 2		
Career role salience* Family role salience	0.26	3.11

Table 3. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Moderating Effects of perceived organizational barriers on the leadership aspiration - inclination in adopting managerial positios Relationship

	inclination in adopting managerial positios	
	β	t
step 1		
leadership aspiration	-0.79	-14.22
perceived organizational barriers	0.01	0.17
step 2		
leadership aspiration* perceived organizational barriers	-0.71	-11.75