Gender similarities in work and well-being outcomes among managers and professionals in Egypt

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to investigate gender similarities and differences among managers and professionals working in a variety of organizations and industries in Egypt. It seeks to replicate and extend previous work by employing a different sample working in a large Muslim country.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from 242 respondents, 146 males and 96 females, using anonymously completed questionnaires, a 48 percent response rate. Measures included personal demographic and work situation characteristics, stable individual difference personality factors, job behaviors, work outcomes, after-work recovery experiences, indicators of quality of life (e.g. work-family conflict and life satisfaction) and psychological well being.

Findings – There were considerable differences in personal demographic and work situation characteristics, consistent with previous findings. Females were younger, less likely to be married, worked at lower organizational levels, were less likely to supervise others, worked in smaller organizations, and earned less income. Males and females were generally similar on stable individual difference personality factors and job behaviors. Females, however, were less satisfied with their careers, less work engaged, and reported higher levels of both exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms; findings different from those observed in other countries female managers did make greater use of the four recovery experiences examined.

Research limitations/implications – Consistent with previous research, considerable demographic and work situation differences were observed. But different from previous research, female and male managers in Egypt reported some similar and some different work and well-being outcomes. The observed differences indicated that women managers are somewhat disadvantaged on both work and well being.

Practical implications – These results suggest that Egyptian organizations need to devote more resources to supporting the career development of managerial and professional women. In addition, Egyptian society needs to challenge the existing stereotypes of women's roles. Entrepreneurship appears to be a realistic prospect for some women managers and professionals dissatisfied with their current careers.

Originality/value – This study provides insights on similarities and differences on personal demographic characteristics and outcome measures among female and male managers in Egypt.

Keywords Egypt, Gender, Managers, Career development, Women, Glass ceilings

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

As more women enter the professional and managerial workforce worldwide, researchers have become increasingly interested in their work experiences and career progress (Davidson and Burke, 2004; Bilimoria and Piderit, 2007; Gatrell *et al.*, 2010; Ruderman and Ohlott, 2002; Wirth, 2001). This emergence of women is likely to have significant effects on organizations and the economy (Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland, 2008). This research has considered the work and career experiences of women themselves and how women's experiences and successes compared with their male counterparts. Most of this work has found significant gender differences on a variety of personal demographic and work situation characteristics (Burke and Mattis, 2005). Thus, women managers and professionals were found to be younger, more likely to be single and childless, have less job and organizational tenure, be at lower organizational levels and earn less income. However, gender differences in work experiences and satisfaction tended to be fewer. For example, while women report more obstacles to career advancement than do men (Barreto *et al.*, 2009; Burke and Mattis, 2005, 2007; Davidson and Burke, 2000; Morrison, 1992; Morrison and Von Glinow, 1990) women generally are as satisfied with their jobs as are men (Nelson and Burke, 2002), and women's leadership behaviors are generally similar to men's (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

The present study examined work experiences, including work and well-being outcomes of female and male managers and professionals working in a variety of organizations and industries in Egypt. To our knowledge, no previous research has considered this question in Egypt (Mostafa, 2003; see also Omair, 2008, for a review of women in management research in the Arab context). In addition, the role of national and cultural differences in values and the effect of these on the experiences of women managers and professionals are just beginning to be addressed (Mostafa, 2003).

Egyptian cultural values

There has been increasing research attention devoted to business in the Middle East over the past two decades. The Middle Eastern economy has flourished, partly as a result of oil and partly as a result of a young and growing population (Ali, 1999; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007). Egypt is similar to other Middle Eastern countries in some ways but different in others (Ali, 1999, 2005; Muna, 1980). Hofstede (1980) found that all Middle Eastern countries shared similar societal and cultural values. These countries indicated large power differences, scored high on uncertainty avoidance, scored low on individualism (or high on collectivism) and scored only slightly above average on masculinity. Egypt is a patriarchal society with boys more highly valued than girls (El-Ghannam, 2001, 2002), and strict gender roles where women are responsible for the home and family (Ali, 2005; Metcalfe, 2006, 2007, 2008; Mostafa, 2003). Hofstede concluded that the small number of women in the workforce generally, alongside their absence at senior levels of management and in politics, reflected religious values (Islam) more than masculine values (El-Saadawi, 1982; Sidani, 2005).

Unfortunately, relatively little is known about the work and career experiences of women in Egypt. Work has traditionally been seen as a male activity associated with the provider and bread winner role, and women have only recently moved into the workforce in sizeable numbers. Women have been seen as responsible for home and family and not for work, representing only 23 percent of the total labor force in Egypt in 2001 (Ramzy, 2002). In addition, it has been difficult to undertake both human resource

management and women in management research in Egypt since many organizations are not interested in such research and many managers do not want their subordinates to participate in research that might be critical of their performance (Ali, 2005; Budhwar and Mellehi, 2007).

However, it must be noted that Egypt is in transition; researchers (El-Kot and Leat, 2008; Leat and El-Kot, 2007) have shown that human resource practices in Egypt tend to reflect a combination of those based on traditional cultural values and newer practices developed in the Western world. There are now an increasing number of women in the workforce (Al-Lamky, 2007; Jamali *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, more and more Egyptians are being educated, with women's numbers in university approaching those of men (Mostafa, 2003). The last few years has witnessed various government programs in Egypt designed to support the development of women. These include:

- the formation of an Egyptian Business Women's Association;
- an increasing number or courses and seminars to develop women's business skills;
- programs to support the development of female entrepreneurs; and
- programs to support and encourage women's participation and leadership in their communities.

Although some progress has been seen in women's development and advancement, organizational and cultural barriers remain (Ali, 2005). There is relatively little organizational interest in the status of women employees (Mostafa, 2003), with no laws against the discrimination of women (Metcalafe, 2007) and little opportunity for women's advancement.

Social factors may account for the small number of women in senior levels in Egypt; these include a patriarchal work contract, as well as cultural and ethical values that create strongly defined gender roles (Metcalfe, 2008). Most women in Egypt work as teachers, nurses and secretaries (Mostafa, 2003; Metcalfe, 2007), with Egyptian society seen as patriarchal and traditional (Ali, 2005; Metcalfe, 2007; Sharabi, 2002), as reflected in the human resource management practices of Egyptian organizations (Japer, 2001). Egypt places a high value on the family (Metcalfe, 2006), and there is a pay gap in favor of men amongst the educated Egyptian workforce (Ali, 2005; Arabsheihani, 2000). Egyptian men have also been shown to harbor unfavorable attitudes towards women who work (Abdalla, 1996; Mahadin, 2002; Mostafa, 2003; Whiteoak *et al.*, 2006).

In addition to the above, there are other factors that hamper gender equality and diversity efforts in Egypt. For example, the Egyptian education system is weak and is in need of improvement (Tyler and Holmes, 2008); Egypt has shown only slow economic development, and gender issues are not seen as important (Ali, 2005; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007). As a consequence, managerial women in Egypt face critical barriers that include cultural and religious values, as well as organizational constraints (e.g. discrimination, pay inequities and lack of support).

This study examined personal demographic and work situation characteristics, stable individual difference personality factors, job demands, job behaviors, work outcomes, after work recovery experiences, quality of life and psychological well being of female and male managers and professionals working in a variety of organizations and industries in Egypt. These measures provide a comprehensive assessment of the

personal and work situation of Egyptian managers, how they behave in their jobs, their satisfaction with their job and career, their efforts to recover off the job following their work days, and their overall quality of life and psychological health. Previous research and writing on gender differences in work experiences and well being (Burke *et al.*, 2009a, b) and work and well being more generally (Barling *et al.*, 2005; Golembiewski, 2001; Schabracq *et al.*, 2003) view these variables as important indicators of satisfaction and health. As such, these data provide a useful start to future research on the work and career experiences of managerial women and how they compare to those of their male colleagues.

Gender represents a dimension of diversity that relates to a sizeable proportion of the Egyptian workforce. We hypothesized that female and male managers would differ on personal and work situation demographics (e.g. age, income, job and organizational tenure). The few published studies of gender differences among managers and professionals in other countries have shown relatively few differences on the work and well-being outcomes being considered here, but given the organizational and cultural challenges and barriers facing Egyptian managerial and professional women, we would expect that females would be disadvantaged on both work and well-being indicators. Furthermore, although this study does not address female entrepreneurship directly, we will also explore the relevance, if any, of our results for female entrepreneurship (Davidson and Burke, 2004, 2011; Ozbilgin and Malach-Pines, 2007), since management and entrepreneurship are often considered together, and Egypt, similar to many other countries, is attempting to encourage and support women in entrepreneurship (Fielden and Davidson, 2005, 2010).

Methodological approach
Procedure
Data were collected between October 2008 and January 2009 from service and manufacturing organizations in two Egyptian cities (Alexandria and Cairo). Members of the research team contacted about 50 organizations in these cities requesting their participation in the research. The 24 cooperating organizations then provided the researchers with a list of managers and professionals. Service organizations included telecommunications, banks, educational institutions and a maritime service provider. Manufacturing organizations included pharmaceutical, petroleum companies and production companies focusing on the production of milk, juice and food. Approximately, 500 managers and professionals were contacted, of which 242 provided completed questionnaires, a 48 percent response rate. Questionnaires were completed anonymously in English. The respondents are best described as a large convenience sample of Egyptian managers and professionals in a variety of industries.

Respondents
Table I presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. Over half were male (60 percent), almost all worked full time (93 percent), over half were 30 years of age or younger (61 percent), most were single (62 percent), without children (64 percent), were university graduates (95 percent), worked 40 hours a week or less (42 percent), were in middle management (33 percent), supervised others (66 percent), earned over LE 25,000 a year in income (46 percent), had relatively short job and organizational tenures (over half having two years or less job tenure − 60 percent, and over one-third having two

	n	$\%$
Gender		
Male	146	60.3
Female	96	39.7
Work status		
Full time	226	93.4
Part time	16	6.6
Marital status		
Married	92	38.0
Single	150	62.0
Parental status		
Children	86	35.5
No children	156	64.5
Education		
High school	12	5.0
Bachelors	185	80.6
Masters	35	14.4
Hours worked		
40 or less	102	42.1
41-45	51	21.1
46-50	49	20.7
51-55	7	2.9
56-60	20	8.2
61 or more	12	5.0
Organizational level		
Non-management	70	28.9
Lower management	56	23.1
Middle management	80	33.1
Senior management	36	14.9
Organizational tenure		
1-2 years	90	37.2
3-5	55	22.7
6-10	56	23.2
11 or more	41	16.9
Organizational size		
250 or less	59	20.2
251-500	36	14.9
501-1,000	47	19.4
1,001-2,000	34	14.1
2,001-5,000	70	28.9
5,001 or more	6	2.5
Age		
25 or less	73	30.2
26-30	74	30.5
31-35	29	12.0
36-40	13	5.4
41-45	13	5.4
46 or older	40	16.5
Length of marriage		
1-5 years	36	40.0
6-10	13	14.4

Table I.
Demographic
characteristics of sample

(*continued*)

	n	%
11-15	7	7.8
16-20	19	21.1
21-25	17	18.9
26 or more	4	4.4
Number of children		
0	155	64.0
1	27	11.2
2	44	18.2
3 or more	16	6.6
Income – LE$		
$10,000 or less	62	25.6
$10,001-$15,000	16	6.6
$15,001-$20,000	22	9.1
$20,001-$25,000	30	12.4
$25,001 or more	112	46.3
Supervisory duties		
Yes	161	66.5
No	81	33.5
Job tenure		
1-2 years	145	59.9
3-5	51	21.1
6-10	43	17.8
11 or more	3	1.2
Function		
Finance	32	13.2
Production	26	10.7
IT	23	9.5
Customer service	22	8.1
Marketing	18	7.4
Sales	17	7.0
Logistics	17	7.0

Table I.

years or less of organizational tenure − 37 percent), and worked in organizations of varying sizes, the average being about 1,000 employees. Respondents fell into several functional areas: IT and logistics, 16 percent; marketing and sales, 14 percent; finance, 13 percent; production, 11 percent; and customer service, 9 percent.

Measures
Different measures were employed in this study, as follows:

- *Personal demographic and work situation characteristics.* A number of personal demographics (e.g. age, gender, level of education, marital and parental status) and work situation characteristics (e.g. organizational level, job and organizational tenure) were measured by single items (Table I).

- *Stable individual difference personality characteristics.* Three stable individual difference personality characteristics were included. Need for achievement (NAch) was measured by a five-item scale ($\alpha = 0.62$) developed by Steers and Braunstein (1976). One item was "I try very hard to improve on my past performance at work."

- *Workaholic behavior.* Two workaholic behavior scales developed by Mudrack (2007) were included. One, non-required work, had four items ($\alpha = 0.82$). An item was "Thinking of ways to improve the quality of work provided to customers and/or co-workers." The other, control others, also had four items ($\alpha = 0.74$). One item was "fixing problems created by other people."

- *Job demands.* Two job demands were included. Work hours were assessed by a single item. Respondents indicated the number of hours they worked in a typical week. Work intensity was assessed by a 15-item scale ($\alpha = 0.74$). Some items were taken from Hewlett and Luce (2006) while others were developed by the researchers. Items included: "an unpredictable flow of work", "availability to clients 24/7" and "a large scope of responsibility that amounts to more than one job."

- *Job behaviors.* Two job behaviors were assessed. Perfectionism was measured by eight items ($\alpha = 0.67$) developed by Spence and Robbins (1992). One item was "I cannot let go of projects until I'm sure they are exactly right." Non-delegation was assessed by seven items ($\alpha = 0.72$) also developed by Spence and Robbins (1992). An item was "I feel that if you want something done correctly you should do it yourself."

- *Work and well-being outcomes.* A wide range of outcome variables were included in this study covering both work and extra-work domains. These variables were consistent with those typically used in studies of work and well being more generally (Barling *et al.*, 2005; Schabracq *et al.*, 2003).

- *Work outcomes.* Four work outcomes were included. Job satisfaction was measured by a seven-item scale ($\alpha = 0.80$) developed by Kofodimos (1993). An item was "I feel challenged by my work." Career satisfaction was assessed by a five-item scale ($\alpha = 0.88$) created by Greenhaus *et al.* (1990). One item was "I feel satisfied with the progress I have made in my career to date." Job stress was measured by a nine-item scale ($\alpha = 0.59$) developed by Spence and Robbins (1992). One item was "Sometimes I feel like my work is going to overwhelm me." Intent to quit was measured by two items ($\alpha = 0.84$) used previously by Burke (1991). One item was "Are you currently looking for a different job in a different organization? (Yes/no)."

- *Work engagement.* Three aspects of work engagement were assessed using scales developed by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002). These were: dedication was assessed by five items ($\alpha = 0.88$). One item was "I am proud of the work that I do." Vigor was measured by six items ($\alpha = 0.72$). An item was "at my work I feel bursting with energy." Absorption was measured by six items ($\alpha = 0.74$). One item was "I am immersed in my work." Respondents indicated their agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree and 5 – strongly agree).

- *Recovery experiences.* Four recovery experiences were measure using scales developed by Sonnentag and Fritz (2007). These were: psychological detachment was measured by four items ($\alpha = 0.92$). One item was "I forget about work." Relaxation was also measured by four items ($\alpha = 0.85$). An item was "I take time for leisure." Mastery was assessed by four items ($\alpha = 0.75$). One item was "I learn new things." Control was measured by four items ($\alpha = 0.88$). An item was "I determine for myself how I will spend my time."

- *Quality of life.* Work-family conflict: three aspects of work-family conflict were assessed using scales developed by Carlson *et al.* (2000). Each had three items and assessed time-, strain- and behavior-based conflict. The respective reliabilities for these were 0.92, 0.60 and 0.64. These three scales were also combined into a composite score since they were significantly and positively inter-correlated ($\alpha = 0.83$). One item was "The stress from my job often makes me irritable when I get home."

- *Time and material affluence.* Measures of time affluence and material affluence were developed by Kasser and Sheldon (2009). Participants rated each item on a five-point agree-disagree scale. Time affluence contained eight items ($\alpha = 0.75$). One item was "I have had enough time to do what I need to do." Material affluence also contained eight items ($\alpha = 0.82$). An item was "I have been able to buy what I want."

- *Psychological well being.* Three aspects of psychological well being were considered. Exhaustion was measured by a nine-item scale ($\alpha = 0.74$), part of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, developed by Maslach *et al.* (1996). An item was "I feel emotionally drained from my work." Psychosomatic symptoms was measured by a 19-item scale ($\alpha = 0.85$) developed by Quinn and Shepard (1974). Respondents indicated how frequently they had experienced each physical symptom (e.g. headaches and difficulty sleeping) in the past year. Life satisfaction was assessed by a five-item scale ($\alpha = 0.68$) created by Diener *et al.* (1985). A sample item was "I am satisfied with my life."

Results
Analysis
Female and male managers were compared using one-way ANOVA. In all comparisons, the sample sizes were 146 males and 96 females. In addition, the scales were presented in a format that sometimes had high ratings associated with higher levels of a construct, and sometimes low ratings associated with higher levels of construct to address concerns about response set tendencies. The text that follows, however, is based on high ratings being associated with higher levels of a construct.

Personal demographic and work situation characteristics
Table II shows the comparisons of female and male managers on a number of personal demographic and work situation characteristics. As hypothesized, significant gender differences were observed. Females were significantly younger, less likely to be married, earned less income, had a lower level of organizational position, were less likely to supervise others, and worked in smaller-sized organizations. Females and males were equally likely to be parents, have similar levels of education, and similar levels of job and organizational tenure.

These results were consistent with other studies of gender differences in management. It should be noted, however, that relatively small differences achieve statistical significance given the large size of the samples, and many of the personal demographic and work situation characteristics were themselves significantly correlated (e.g. age and organizational tenure, organizational level and income).

	Females		Males		
	X	SD	X	SD	p
Personal demographics					
Age	29.5	8.33	34.4	12.03	0.001
Marital status	1.3	0.46	1.4	0.44	0.05
Parental status	1.5	0.48	1.6	0.48	NS
Number of children	0.5	0.81	0.8	1.11	NS
Education	3.0	0.39	3.1	0.45	NS
Income	3.2	1.84	3.7	1.56	0.05
Work situation characteristics					
Organizational level	2.1	0.94	2.5	1.08	0.001
Supervision duties	1.5	0.50	1.2	0.42	0.001
Job tenure	3.3	2.90	3.2	2.91	NS
Organizational tenure	5.7	4.84	7.2	7.98	NS
Organizational size	1,324.3	1,413.4	1,786.3	1,587.6	0.05

Table II.
Personal demographic
and work situation
characteristics

Individual difference personality factors

Table III presents a comparison of female and male managers on stable individual difference personality factors. The results were mixed; there were no gender differences on NAch and non-required work, but females scored significantly lower on control of others. These findings – the general absence of difference – were consistent with previous conclusions; the significant gender difference on control of others likely reflects the higher organizational levels of the male managers and the fact that male managers were more likely to be supervising others.

Job demands, job behaviors and work outcomes

Table IV shows the comparisons of female and male manufacturing managers on measures of job demands, job behaviors and work outcomes including engagement. Significant gender differences were observed on about half the measures (five of 11). Females reported lower levels of work intensity, more perfectionism, less career satisfaction, lower levels of vigor and less intent to quit. The two groups reported similar levels of hours worked, non-delegation, job satisfaction, job stress, dedication and absorption. It is likely that some of these significant gender differences reflect differences in organizational level noted in Table II. The finding of no gender difference on other variables was consistent with our hypothesis.

Recovery experiences

Table V presents the comparisons of female and male managers using four recovery experiences. Females made greater use of all four recovery experiences (detachment, relaxation, mastery and control).

	Females		Males		
Individual difference factors	X	SD	X	SD	p
NAch	24.3	5.35	24.6	4.51	NS
Non-required work	14.4	3.56	13.6	3.13	NS
Control others	11.7	4.19	13.2	2.86	0.01

Table III.
Individual difference
factors

	Females		Males		
	X	SD	X	SD	p
Job demands					
Hours worked	45.4	7.1	45.6	10.02	NS
Work intensity	36.6	9.19	39.9	8.29	0.01
Job behaviors					
Perfectionism	14.9	4.26	16.0	3.72	0.05
Non-delegation	20.4	5.50	21.2	4.66	NS
Work outcomes					
Job satisfaction	27.4	4.08	27.0	5.60	NS
Career satisfaction	12.3	3.78	11.2	4.80	0.05
Job stress	25.2	5.78	24.0	4.26	NS
Intent to quit	3.4	0.88	3.1	0.90	0.05
Work engagement					
Vigor	16.1	4.28	14.3	3.75	0.001
Dedication	12.1	5.33	11.1	4.00	NS
Absorption	15.3	3.64	15.2	4.29	NS

Table IV.
Job demands, job
behaviors and work
outcomes

	Females		Males		
	X	SD	X	SD	p
Recovery experiences					
Disengagement	13.2	5.61	11.9	4.38	0.05
Relaxation	14.7	3.89	13.7	3.87	0.05
Mastery	14.7	2.48	13.0	3.55	0.001
Control	17.0	2.44	15.0	3.92	0.001

Table V.
Recovery experiences

Quality of life and psychological well being
Table VI shows the comparisons of female and male managers on various indicators of quality of life (work-family conflict, time and material affluence) and psychological well being (exhaustion, psychosomatic symptoms and life satisfaction). Male and female managers were significantly different on about half the measures; females indicated more work-family behavior-based conflict, higher levels of exhaustion, more psychosomatic symptoms and higher levels of material affluence. The two groups were similar on time-based, strain-based and total work-family conflict, time affluence and life satisfaction.

Discussion
This study considered gender differences in personal and work situation characteristics, stable personality factors, job demands, job behaviors, after work recovery experiences, work outcomes, quality of life and indicators of psychological health among managers and professionals in Egypt. Based on the results of previously published research, it was hypothesized that females and males would differ significantly on personal and work situation demographics but there would be few gender differences on the remaining study variables. Our data (Tables II through VI) were generally consistent with our hypotheses and sometimes inconsistent with previous findings. Thus, widespread gender differences were present on personal demographic and work situation characteristics with

	Females		Males		
	X	SD	X	SD	_p_
Quality of life					
Work-family conflict	9.8	2.16	9.4	2.35	
Strain based					NS
Behavior based	9.3	2.07	8.5	2.50	0.05
Time based	8.5	3.47	9.0	3.46	NS
Total work-family conflict	27.6	6.39	26.9	6.45	NS
Affluence					
Time	22.5	5.50	23.5	5.15	NS
Material	30.2	5.23	27.7	6.01	0.001
Psychological well being					
Exhaustion	30.8	7.75	26.3	9.74	0.001
Psychosomatic symptoms	40.7	8.42	38.4	9.66	0.01
Life satisfaction	15.9	5.15	16.4	5.46	NS

Table VI.
Quality of life and
psychological well being

females being younger, more likely single, in lower level jobs, less likely to supervise others and earning less income (Table II). In addition, females reported working in less intense jobs (Table IV). These significant differences likely reflect the fact that males were in higher level organizational jobs with more supervisory responsibilities.

Females and males were similar on two of the three personality factors studied (Table III), but females were lower on control of others, again reflecting their lower organizational level. In addition, males and females were generally similar on some job behaviors (e.g. non-delegation stress) and some work outcomes such as job satisfaction and job stress (Table IV). Some of the differences present, such as lower levels of work engagement on two of the three measures, were likely to be a reflection of their lower organizational levels. Females made greater use of all four recovery experiences while at home (Table V). Finally, females were different from males on quality of life and psychological health (Table VI), reporting higher levels of work-family behavior-based conflict, more exhaustion and more psychosomatic symptoms.

Research has typically shown significant gender differences in personal and work situation demographics, suggesting that females are "disadvantaged" (at lower organizational levels and earning less income) but generally report similar work experiences (with the exception of harassment and career obstacles) and well-being outcomes. Our results were somewhat inconsistent with this pattern.

With regard to whether female and male managers and professionals working in various organizations and industries in Egypt report similar work experiences, satisfactions and well being, our data suggest both similarities and differences. We interpret this as a sign of limited progress; females and males generally reported some differences in levels of satisfaction, quality of life and psychological health.

These findings, while consistent with some studies comparing the experiences of females and males in similar occupations (e.g. university professors, physicians, hotel managers, police officers and oil rig workers) in different countries (Norway and Turkey) that have shown no gender differences, women in management research findings in Egypt (as well as in other countries) have shown that managerial and professional women face unique challenges in their work and careers (Aycan, 2004), and the Egyptian culture has been shown to a masculine bias (Hofstede, 1980).

We can only speculate as to why both similarities and differences were found between the male and female managers and professionals that took part in this study. First, considering similarities, the female managers in our sample were survivors; they had been successful so far in potentially demanding occupations. It may be that females having difficulty being successful had already left their profession. Second, there is some evidence here that females and males have the attitudes and abilities for them to be successful in this profession in spite of the potential challenges they face, for example, females worked long hours, had similar levels of NAch and the same levels of workaholism components. Third, this study did not examine perceptions of bias, discrimination and harassment that have been previously reported in other sectors. It is likely that significant gender differences would have been observed on these measures. Fourth, most respondents were young and had limited job and organizational tenure. It may be that with the passing of time more women managers and professionals become frustrated with their disadvantage.

Implications for organizations and their management
As Egypt moves from an agricultural to a goods and services economy, the growth of the service and manufacturing sectors has opened up a number of career opportunities. The service sector relies on the skills of employees to meet the needs of both employers and customers. In order to meet these needs, colleges and universities in Egypt and elsewhere have developed academic programs at various levels to produce a highly skilled and motivated workforce. No country can afford to ignore the talents of half of their population.

We have previously interpreted our findings of both similar and different work, career and well-being experiences reported by females and males in a number of different occupations as a sign of limited progress and a cause for concern (Burke *et al.*, 2009a, b; Koyuuncu *et al.*, 2006). While some progress has been made, we should not be lulled into believing that Egyptian organizations have addressed the unique challenges and barriers women managers and professionals still face (Metcalfe, 2008; Mostafa, 2003). This brings us to the question of what actually constitutes career success. Career researchers have considered two types of career success criteria: objective and subjective. Objective indicators include income, number of subordinates and organizational level. Subjective indicators include job satisfaction, quality of life and psychological well being. There appears to be significant gender differences on objective indicators of career success and some gender similarities on subjective indicators of career success. Why should this be? Several explanations are possible. Women are less interested than men in objective indicators of career success (money and perks); women are more interested in subjective indicators of career success such as quality of life and balance.

A related question is why women are as satisfied as men even though they earn less income and are at lower organizational levels? Women in Egypt may be satisfied with their careers in spite of encountering barriers, challenges and discrimination since they have an opportunity to make a contribution both at work and in their society. In addition, the women in our study may have had lower expectations of equality given the cultural values of their country.

Practical implications
Although our study has yielded some positive findings, Egyptian organizations still need to make efforts to support the career aspirations of their female managers and professionals.

However, Egyptian organizations have been slow to embrace this challenge (Ali, 2005). Fortunately, considerable knowledge has accumulated over the past decade on best practices in this area (Aycan, 2004; Catalyst, 1998). For example, Catalyst (1998) has identified the following to be characteristics of a successful organizational change effort supporting women's career advancement:

- the motivation and rationale for the change must be aligned to the organization's business strategy and profitability;
- there must be support from the highest level of the organization;
- there needs to be a communication plan clearly stating how the best human resource management practices are linked to business needs; and
- an accountability mechanism must be developed so that the initiative does not lose momentum.

The following elements have been found to be useful in supporting women's career success and progress:

- leadership development programs, the identification and development of high-potential women, cross-functional training, support that ensures that women gain critical bottom line responsibilities, and succession planning;
- mentoring programs;
- women's networks;
- work-life balance and flexibility initiatives;
- accountability of managers for developing their female supervisors;
- the measurement of results;
- training programs; and
- evaluating and modifying the women's initiative based on progress to date.

Given the barriers that managerial women face in Egypt, necessary actions at the country level would include training for women in management, and anti-discrimination policies and programs undertaken by both employing organizations and government departments.

Conclusions

Organizations and their management need to adapt the above suggestions to that they fit with their reality (Aycan, 2001). Most of the advice offered above was based on the experience of organizations in the highly industrialized and developed world (e.g. North America and Western Europe). It is likely that some of this "wisdom" will not fit the Egyptian national culture and its values and customs, nor might it fit with the Egyptian business environment (Aycan *et al.*, 2000; Wasti, 1998). Organizations and their management need to adapt these Western-based conclusions to their own workplaces or help their employees grasp, adapt and embrace this Western guidance.

Egyptian women and entrepreneurship

Not surprisingly, the small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector in Egypt, plays a critical role in the Egyptian economy in terms of its contribution to gross

domestic product (Economic Research Forum, 2007); there are currently over two million SMEs in Egypt. In addition, the number of Egyptian SMEs continues to grow annually. The Egyptian Government is attempting to increase the size of the SME sector by making it easier to get financing, dealing with corruption in the SME sector and reducing government bureaucracy. Some of these offerings are targeted specifically at women. Yet, relatively little research has been undertaken in the Egyptian context (see Weeks, 2009, for a discussion of women business owners in the Middle East and North Africa, and Roomi and Harrison, 2009, for a description of women-only entrepreneurship training in Pakistan).

Although a higher percentage of men pursue entrepreneurship, women are increasingly moving into this area (Davidson and Burke, 2004). Yet, research on women entrepreneurs is just beginning to accumulate (Brush *et al.*, 2009; Marlow *et al.*, 2009). Women entrepreneurs can make an important contribution to a country's economy (Brush *et al.*, 2007). Women's motivations for entering entrepreneurship have both "push" and "pull" elements (Orhan, 2005). Potential "push" factors reported by the women managers in our study included lower levels of career satisfaction, less engagement with their work (more boredom) and higher levels of psychological distress; potential "pull" factors include levels of education, high levels of achievement motivation and the potential for better work-family integration. Previous research has indicated that job frustration and dissatisfaction were associated with women's later entrepreneurship activity (Mattis, 2005; Moore, 2000; Buttner and Moore, 1997). Other women "evolve" from managerial jobs to entrepreneurship (Moore, 2000).

Limitations of the research
The authors fully acknowledge the limitations of this research. First, all data were collected using self-reporting questionnaires, raising the possibility (albeit small) of responses being affected by use of a common method. Second, the data were collected at one particular point in time, making it difficult to establish causal relationships. Third, a few of the measures had levels of internal consistency reliability below the generally accepted level of 0.70. Fourth, although the sample was relatively large, the authors do not claim it to be representative of Egyptian managers and professionals in the manufacturing sector. Fifth, the sample respondents were relatively young, single and without children; it is not clear to what extent these results would generalize to an older sample having both children and longer work and organizational tenure. Finally, the extent to which these findings would generalize to respondents working in other industrial sectors or in other countries is yet to be determined.

Future research directions
A number of new research directions would add to our understanding of possible gender differences in the experiences of female and male managers and professionals. One of these might include measures of perceived bias, discrimination and sexual harassment (Burke *et al.*, 2008). Another might involve undertaking interviews with both women and men to examine their work experiences in a less structured way. Measures of positive organizational experiences (Cameron *et al.*, 2003), such as passion, gratitude and citizenship, rather than the more commonly used indicators of distress, would also serve to enhance understanding in this area, as would research that includes women and men at higher organizational levels and with longer job and organizational tenures, as well as

families. Finally, moving this research forward to include a clearer focus on female and male small business owners and entrepreneurs would add much to our understanding of gender differences in various sectors of the Egyptian economy. This would be particularly interesting, as it is not clear whether women entrepreneurs in developing countries face greater or lesser obstacles and opportunities to their efforts and success (Jamali, 2009).

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