



Empowering Women in University Leadership: The Impact of Academic Counseling and Psychological Services in Iran and Iraq

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Abstract:

This article presents a theory using an interpretive approach to explore the role of counseling and psychological services in empowering women in management and leadership positions at universities. The study systematically examines this role through data collected from 22 participants, including students, staff, professors, and female university managers, from Kurdistan University in Sanandaj and Salah al-Din University in Erbil. Participants were purposefully selected, and data was gathered via semi-structured interviews. Analysis involved a novel method and continuous comparative analysis through three-stage theoretical coding. This process identified 300 open codes, 35 central codes, and seven selective codes: mental ability, economic ability, political ability, social ability, group ability, physical ability, and academic ability. The findings revealed that empowerment is a process rather than a product. For counseling and psychological service programs to be effective, all individuals involved in the empowerment process must have a clear understanding of its requirements and methods. Ultimately, the success of these efforts is likely determined by the women themselves. While empowerment is crucial within universities, creating a positive organizational atmosphere and a supportive culture that fosters spontaneous empowerment among female students, employees, and managers is equally important. Moreover, establishing empowerment initiatives strengthens the move towards university independence and reinforces the perception of higher education institutions as unique entities with distinct cultures. The study also highlights the importance of context and situational factors in implementing empowerment, emphasizing the need to avoid applying models that do not align with cultural contexts. Finally, university administrators must be personally committed to empowering women in management and leadership roles before any efforts can be successful.

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Introduction

The past three decades have witnessed a continuous increase in awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equality and wider access to basic human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health, education and social, cultural and economic and political roles. Even with increasing international awareness of gender issues, it is a worrying fact that no country has yet been able to close the widening gender gap. Meanwhile, empowering university students and staff is critically important for their academic and professional progress.

Psychological empowerment refers to the feeling of competence, self-efficacy and control that people experience in their personal and professional lives. In the case of women, this process refers to the development of self-awareness, self-confidence to express themselves, and recognition of their worth and abilities. This leads to improved decision-making and leadership skills and the ability to live a fulfilling life with meaningful relationships (Cook & Glass, 2014). Many factors including education, employment and access to resources affect the psychological empowerment of women. Women who have access to education, job opportunities and resources feel more in control of their lives and experience less feelings of helplessness and dependence. They can also make decisions about their health, family, and finances that have a positive impact on their overall well-being. In addition, family and community support also play an important role in women's psychological empowerment. When women are respected, valued and supported by their family and

community, they are more likely to develop a sense of worth and self-esteem and are more likely to achieve their goals (Coiro, Bettis & Compass, 2017).

Psychological empowerment and counseling for women includes providing the necessary tools and support to promote mental health and emotional stability. Counseling services can provide a safe and supportive space for women to explore their thoughts and feelings, solve problems, and develop skills to deal with life's challenges. One of the approaches of psychological empowerment for women is through cognitive-behavioral therapy. This method is a type of psychotherapy that focuses on changing negative thought patterns and developing practical and positive coping skills. This approach can help women develop a sense of self-awareness and self-efficacy that can improve their ability to manage stress and difficult situations (Schutz, 2019).

Another approach to psychological empowerment is through feminist therapy. This approach believes that social, political and economic factors play a role in women's mental health. It recognizes the importance of investigating the impact of gender roles, gender discrimination and discrimination on women's mental health. This approach can help women recognize external factors that may affect their mental health, build a sense of empowerment, and improve their ability to cope with these challenges. Counseling can also provide a space for women to explore issues of trauma and abuse, especially for those who have experienced gender-based violence. Counseling can help women deal with the emotional and psychological effects of abuse, prepare safety plans, and work

to rebuild their lives (Santos & Jalalzai, 2021).

Finally, psychological empowerment and counseling for women is one of the basic aspects of improving their emotional and mental health. These approaches can help women develop self-awareness and self-efficacy, reduce stress, and manage challenging situations. By investing in these services, we can create a more just society where women have access to the resources and support they need to thrive (Haghighat, 2013).

Psychological counseling of gender leadership and management empowerment is a specialized form of counseling that focuses on the unique challenges of women in leadership and management positions. This type of counseling aims to help women overcome obstacles they may face in the workplace, develop assertiveness and self-confidence, and identify and address bias and discrimination in the workplace. Counseling can help women in leadership positions develop the skills necessary to navigate complex workplace dynamics and improve their decision-making, communication, and conflict resolution skills. It can also help women develop practical strategies for managing stress and work-life balance, and learn how to manage their time effectively and prioritize tasks (Narayan, 2005).

Leadership and management consulting can also address gender bias and discrimination in the workplace. This can include helping women recognize and challenge discriminatory workplace practices, building strong alliances and networks, and developing techniques to support themselves and others. Additionally, counseling can help women overcome internalized

gender biases that may affect their personal and professional lives. This can include building a sense of self-worth and self-confidence, challenging negative self-talk, and building resilience to overcome challenges and setbacks. Overall, gender leadership and management empowerment psychological counseling is a powerful tool for women in leadership positions. It can help women develop the skills, confidence and resilience they need to succeed in the workplace, overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. By supporting women in leadership positions in this way, a more just and inclusive workplace culture can be created that benefits everyone (Lammers & Gast, 2017).

Belief in social, political and economic equality, the movement that was organized around this belief. Gender theory emerged from the general movement for women's empowerment around the world. Feminism can be defined as the recognition and criticism of male supremacy and the attempt to change it. However, women's goals are to show the importance of women and to reveal that throughout history women have been inferior to men. From increasing productivity to improving collaboration, to motivating organizational commitment and reducing employee burnout, the benefits of having women leaders in organizations and workplaces are incredible. Women welcome an inclusive approach that helps them develop policies that are inclusive. These leadership characteristics are not only revealed in the management of higher education, but also show how these institutions perceive psychological guidance and counseling and, therefore, determine the behavior

of students and staff of these educational institutions. The world has grown and women have fought for their rights and are now in management and leadership positions unlike in previous centuries. The presence of women in management teams is usually associated with healthy social commitment and an enhanced collaborative leadership style. Evaluating the impact of women in business shows that their influence leads to improved motivation and productivity. Experts argue that one of the benefits associated with women's leadership and management is the promotion of work-family balance, which is an essential part of a country's growth, as well as improving the quality of life of families (Cook & Glass, 2014).

Academic learners must adapt to an environment characterized by rapid change, ambiguity, and uncertainty, and diminishing support systems. Students have to manage a series of private and psychological problems caused by such environments. These problems range from natural change and development, education and learning, and anxiety about work to mental illness at the clinical level (Coiro, Bettis & Compass, 2017). They state that there is a general agreement in higher education that the comprehensive role of individual counseling and psychological is to help students grow, adapt and learn while preventing dangerous and self-destructive tendencies and allowing the individual to succeed. In the academic community, the mechanisms used by the higher education system to achieve this goal differ from one institution to another, depending on the philosophy, mission, availability of required resources, and the type of leadership of the institutions. Women's leadership creates an environment that allows

counseling and psychological counseling in institutions to gain massive support and thus be effective.

Women in higher education leadership offer a variety of benefits not only to students but also to the staff of educational institutions. Women have a competitive edge in soft skills and inspire people to dream more, study more, work better and become better people in life. These soft skills make them empathetic to those around them, thus encouraging them to create an environment that helps staff and students achieve their academic goals (Lammers & Gast, 2017). One of the main ways to create such an environment is to promote psychological guidance and counseling in these educational institutions. The need for psychological guidance and counseling in higher education institutions is cut off between different stakeholders in these institutions. Experts argue that even with guidance and counseling departments in these institutions, employees rarely use these services. They state that an effective counseling environment for employees should be easy for employees and the counselor, should be a safe place to discuss problems, help personnel to better recognize their problems, create and develop coping skills. Help them find real solutions to their problems and learn to see things more positively. Providing such an environment reduces the stress level of employees and thus reduces absenteeism and increases their level of job satisfaction (Morton, Mergler & Boman, 2014).

Guidance and counseling processes for students in higher education institutions are designed to facilitate academic progress, improve behavior, class attendance, as well as social and

independent growth. These programs guide students on how to deal with psychological issues that may be causing them academic distress. The therapist helps them encourage problem-solving skills that help them with various issues not only in their own lives but in general. Guidance and counseling help students to learn to cope with different situations that they encounter in their studies. Life, for example, how to communicate with their peers. It also shapes the character of students and creates sufficient discipline and thus leads them to their higher potential goals (Schutz, 2019).

There is a compulsory education policy for all countries, although any country may have such a policy. UNESCO emphasizes that the number of illiterate women is twice that of men, which is worrying. This means that more women than men lack basic education, which makes the number of people who receive tertiary education even lower. Education is an essential factor in developing countries because knowledge empowers people, equipping them with skills to fight poverty. However, the goal of providing quality education is unattainable without human potential. Consulting is one of the most effective ways to create human capabilities. Counseling not only helps students focus on their studies and achieve their goals, but also provides an environment that makes dreams come true (UNESCO, 2014).

Empowering women is a necessary tool to achieve gender equality and reduce class differences between men and women (Vos, 2020). For this purpose, the concept of empowering women has been identified as an important factor in development. In fact, it is sustainable and effective for the

realization of human rights and the key to socio-economic development. It is also necessary to consider empowerment as a collective concept (Sharma, 2014).

Extensive research has been done on measuring the empowerment of women in the Middle East. From the perspective of (Narayan, 2005), empowerment can be defined as follows: "Empowerment is the expansion of women's assets and capabilities to participate, negotiate, influence, control and respond to the institutions that affect their lives" (p. 5). A more provocative definition of the term is provided. Empowerment is "the domain of people who are disempowered, but then gain the ability to exercise choice. This concept requires a process of change and includes three components: agency, resources and achievements" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 15). As a result, empowerment can ensure, among other things, more balanced developments of a country in financial, social and political aspects. It is primarily the result of social or cultural systems rather than individual experiences and characteristics.

Also, empowerment can be considered a process in which women can freely develop themselves, analyze and express their needs and pursue their interests without being restricted by the government, religion or social norms. From this point of view, women's freedom and the importance of their access to resources are necessary to gain more power and higher social governments (Haghighat, 2013). It seems that this definition focuses more on economic empowerment and less on changing social systems such as patriarchy. However, characteristics such as free participation, control, development and influence are

highlighted by most authors in their definitions of women's empowerment. However, although empowerment is a significant concept with many aspects, most organizations and training centers have not fully grasped it and often focus on only a few aspects of empowerment. For example, the World Bank mainly focuses on the economic empowerment of women (The World Bank, 2018).

Therefore, highlighting all aspects related to the concept of empowerment will deepen our insight into it and will be helpful in identifying current shortcomings, respectively. According to some theoretical and empirical studies, social, economic and legal empowerment are the main factors affecting the empowerment of women. Social empowerment can be seen as a process to create a sense of self-confidence, autonomy and individual and collective action in order to change social relations, institutions and discourses that exclude women and keep them in poverty. Belonging, leadership relationships and sense of identity in relation to others. Economic empowerment is the ability to make decisions and act on decisions that include control and allocation of financial resources. Although economic empowerment includes cultural and individual empowerment, it also includes collective, psychological, physical and self-empowerment. Collective empowerment refers to the collective assets and capabilities of people such as voice, organization, representation and group identification (Schutz, 2019).

Psychological empowerment includes self-confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to imagine and pursue a better future (Spreitzer, 1996). In light of this concept, self-empowerment can

be justified as taking control of life by setting goals, making positive choices, and self-reflection that help women understand their strengths and weaknesses and believe in themselves. (Martin, Galentino & Townsend, 2014). But physical fitness includes states such as health, condition and body abilities (Velija, Mierzwinski, & Fortune, 2013). Cultural empowerment is closely related to what (Bourdieu, 1977) described as "cultural capital". It requires a person's social assets such as education, speech style, intelligence, dress style, etc., which can promote social mobility in the society. From the point of view of some experts (Morton, Mergler & Boman, 2014), cultural empowerment can be shown in the education of parents and socialization of the classifications in which the person is located. The last but most important component of economic empowerment is individual empowerment, which includes things that belong to a person; It gives a feeling of security and strength. For example, housing, livestock, land and savings can be mentioned. It can include the capabilities of all types of accessories (Schutz, 2019).

Legal empowerment includes laws and regulations that the country provides to its people to access other types of empowerment (UNDP, 2013). Political empowerment is the possibility, access and fulfillment of political positions (WEF, 2019). All these factors are connected to each other and help each other to achieve general empowerment. For example, to increase economic empowerment, legal and social empowerment should also be worked on. This shows how important it is to work on all factors and how complicated it is to achieve general empowerment of women.

The world has grown and women have fought for their rights and are now in management and leadership positions unlike in previous centuries. The presence of women in management teams is usually associated with healthy social commitment and an enhanced collaborative leadership style. Evaluating the impact of women in business shows that their influence leads to improved motivation and productivity. Experts argue that one of the benefits associated with women's leadership and management is the promotion of work-family balance, which is an essential component for the growth of a country as well as improving the quality of life of families. However, women's leadership creates an environment that allows counseling and psychological counseling in institutions to gain enormous support and thus be effective (Cook & Glass, 2014).

According to the regulations for the establishment of student counseling centers, in universities and public and non-governmental higher education institutions, these centers are under the supervision of the student and cultural vice president and related to the central counseling office in the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. The activities of this center can be divided into four areas: psychological services (for clients), support services (for clients), citizenship services (for students and other academics), and educational and research services (for the public) (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2010).

Counseling and Therapy Department: Psychological and counseling services can be considered the heart of this center, which offers individual and group counseling and psychotherapy

sessions to students in collaboration with expert counselors. Its purpose is to respond to counseling and psychological needs in the fields of personal, family, marriage, education, communication, legal, religious and spiritual and counseling and group psychotherapy in order to improve the level of mental health of the student community, so that finally the clients have appropriate mental and psychological conditions. Achieve more and more cheerfully. Acquainting students with psychological problems is another goal of this department, so that by observing the symptoms in themselves or others, they go for treatment and reduce the consequences of the problems. This section includes the following sections:

1- Reception: One of the parts that students are in contact with upon arrival is the center's reception department. Through the student portal, each student can fill out the counseling admission form electronically from the student affairs section and go to the admissions office in person with the received code to determine the counseling time. The most important responsibility of the experts of this department is to refer the clients to the specialists of the same field according to the reason for the referral.

2- Psychotherapy and counseling services: psychologists and counselors provide psychotherapy and individual counseling services to students according to their field of study and experience in three specialized working groups.

3- Clinical and Health Working Group: A number of students, for various reasons, have psychological problems such as: anxiety, depression, and obsession. One of the activities of

this working group is early identification and treatment of such problems.

4- Academic Working Group: Examining students' problems related to academic and academic subjects, including lack of interest in courses, acquiring proper study skills in the university, desire to change majors, academic failure, etc.

5- Premarital, Marriage and Family Counseling Working Group: Marriage, like any other decision, requires thinking and evaluation. Counselors in this field help to increase students' knowledge, maturity and individual independence and strengthen their families.

6- 3- Dormitory Counseling: The goal of dormitory counseling is to improve the level of mental health among dormitory students, to attend on time in critical cases, to identify injured people, to treat them in time, and to prevent academic failure and to prevent academic probation.

7- 4- Psychiatric services: One of the important members of the treatment team is a psychiatrist who helps to solve the psychological problems of students by using drug therapy.

8- 5- Psychometric services: Psychometric specialists help the process of diagnosis and treatment of students by using a set of comprehensive and various psychological tests.

9- 6- Intervention in crisis: academic and career concerns, ambiguity in relationships with the opposite sex, being away from family and facing conditions and issues that require adaptation can be considered among the stresses experienced by students. Sometimes a person feels helpless and hopeless in these situations

and is looking for a way to get rid of a problem or crisis that makes him suffer a lot. In the absence of necessary skills to manage them, they lead to emotional problems and mental crisis, which require urgent interventions and immediate help of counselors and psychologists. The main responsibility of the crisis intervention department is to identify and accompany these students in order to solve their emotional and spiritual problems in a safe and calm environment.

10- Mental health monitoring plan for newly arrived students: Among the implementation plans of the counseling center is the mental health monitoring plan for newly arrived students, which has been carried out in pencil and paper form since 2015, and since 2016, according to the order of the ministry, it can be implemented electronically and based on The state of mental health of students is evaluated at the beginning of their arrival, and those who are prone to problems are given counseling and treatment (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2010).

Research purposes

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of female employees and students in public universities regarding women's empowerment strategies and the role of psychological counseling services in students' leadership skills and abilities. In order to understand the role of psychological counseling services in higher education institutions on the empowerment of women management, the research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What kind of leadership and management empowerment is provided by the university through counseling and psychological services?

2. How to strengthen the leadership ability of female students with counseling and psychological services?

3. What challenges threaten the effectiveness of counseling and psychological services in the process of leadership and management empowering female students?

4. How can the university expand and improve the access of female students to effective counseling and psychological services?

5. What are the consequences of leadership and management empowering women in the university by using counseling and psychological services?

Research Method

A- *Research approach and strategy:*

Since the purpose of this research is to obtain detailed and rich information from the participants' experiences of women's management empowerment strategies in higher education institutions, an interpretive and qualitative approach is the most appropriate. Therefore, the foundational data theory method will be used to collect data. Because the database theory provides us with a model that will serve to deepen our understanding of the complex issues that women face in society. This method of data

collection is related to research concerns and corresponds to the academic background and professional skills of the researcher as a consultant.

B- *Research field and participants:*

The research field of this study was in the city of Sanandaj and the potential participants of this research included members of the university community. Therefore, some members of the university community (managers, professors, female employees and female students with the exception of two males) were invited to participate in the research in a targeted manner. They were special contributors who had rich action and experience related to empowerment in the university. For example, they were entrepreneurs, had experience in supervising a group of people, had been assigned authority by the university or society, and had been able to play a leadership role in their field of work. This method is mostly used when expert samples are needed. There is no general agreement about the sample size in qualitative studies. In total, according to theoretical saturation, 23 people agreed to conduct interviews, whose demographic characteristics, duration, frequency and method of interviews are given in Table 1:

Table 1: Demographic Information of Research Participants

No.	Gender	Education	Position	Years of Experiences	Duration of Interview	Model of Interview	Frequency
1	Female	BA	Manager	29	110	In person	2
2	Female	BA	Employee	24	87	In person	1
3	Female	BA	Employee	20	95	In person	1
4	Female	MA	Employee	18	70	In person	1
5	Male	BA	Employee	14	90	In person	1
6	Female	MA	Employee	10	62	In person	1
7	Female	BA	Student	-	120	In person	1
8	Female	MA	Employee	16	83	In person	1
9	Female	BA	Student	-	85	In person	1
10	Female	BA	Student	-	67	In person	1
11	Female	BA	Student	-	75	Virtual	1
12	Female	MA	Student	-	75	In person	1
13	Female	MA	Student	-	100	Telephone	1
14	Female	PhD	Faculty	8	105	In person	1
15	Female	MA	Student	-	110	In person	1
16	Female	MA	Student	-	98	In person	1
17	Female	MA	Student	-	92	In person	2
18	Mmale	PhD	Faculty	9	121	In person	2
19	Female	PhD	Faculty	12	124	In person	2
20	Female	PhD	Faculty	14	100	Virtual	1
21	Female	PhD	Candidate	-	98	In person	1
22	Female	PhD	Candidate	-	90	In person	1

C- Data collection tools: According to the purpose of this research, there was a need to obtain rich data during the interaction with the participants. Therefore, a semi-structured and in-depth interview protocol was used (the protocol is attached to the article). In the nature of the in-depth interview process, there is a hidden interest in understanding the lived experience of the participants and the meaning they create from that experience (Wan Mannen, 1990). As (Paton, 1989) suggests, without context, there is little possibility of discovering the meaning of an experience. The duration of each interview varied from 65 to 120 minutes. Before starting, the purpose of the interview and the topic of the research were re-presented to all the

interviewees. After this introduction, the interviewees were asked to record their interview. Each interview started with relatively neutral questions and then moved on to more important questions that made the interviewees better able to answer the questions. Also, in all the interviews, the order of the questions and the way of expressing them were tried to be the same, which does not make any difference in the answers of the interviewees.

D- Method of data analysis: The purpose of data analysis was to present a descriptive, analytical and comprehensive explanation of the empowerment process of women's leadership in order to reflect the participants' experiences and

researchers' interpretations in the best way.

The oral text of the interviews was audio-recorded and then transcribed and coded using MAXqda2020 computer software. Particular attention will be paid to participants' understanding of how universities' psychological and counseling services can empower women in terms of leadership skills, as well as the ways in which they have claimed and reclaimed power in their lives, and their contribution to the economy. Social life theoretical assumptions of narrative psychological counseling is based on fully understanding the importance of cultural struggle and identifying their battles with the individual.

The following steps were taken to analyze the data. It should be noted that MAXqda software was used to manage the created data:

- Preliminary coding: all the transcripts from the interviews were recorded in special coding worksheets

(like Table 2). At this stage, circle drawing, highlighting, coloring, and underlining words, phrases, and quotes were used, and codable points were identified.

- First round coding: In this stage, "open coding" was used. This type of coding consists of breaking qualitative data into separate parts, examining them carefully and comparing them to find their similarities and differences. According to the nature of the studied phenomenon and in order to represent the experiences as best as possible, process codes were used (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

- Second round coding: this stage included organizing and reanalyzing the coded data with the methods of the first round. The main goal of the researchers was to develop a sense of meaning of the organization based on conceptual and theoretical categories extracted from the first round of codes. The output of this stage of analysis was the central and selective codes.

Table 2: The method of converting the text of the speeches into primary codes

<p>It refers to the fact that someone can control the situation around them, someone who is able to manage whatever is happening or cover the issues and solve the problems more wisely and thoroughly, in the Middle East women are empowered. Men do not give power to women, and women do not have power in their hands and do not have authority, they cannot do many things. Fortunately, this idea has changed a bit, because we are trying to change it (P 1).</p>	<p>control the situation around you Event management (in) Solving problems wisely (in) (p) Not giving power and opportunity to women Trying to change the status of women</p>
<p>First as a woman we may start with ourselves and take care of ourselves and our body and go to the gym like men and we should also strengthen our minds by studying and participating in every part of society. In fact, this is a very good thing, as in the future we will see that women with self-confidence, they will trust themselves, that education creates a very powerful gate for women (P 2).</p>	<p>The beginning of empowerment from a woman's body Women's physical education (in) (p) participation in all sectors of society (in) (p) Education of the gate of women's empowerment</p>

<p>It would have been better if there had been empowerment in previous academic courses, once it emerges at the university level, it will not be very effective... Previously, in the field of technology, women were on the sidelines, now it has improved, but in the field of management, which is a traditional field, women have a weak presence. Or the field is not given at all. First, the stereotypical and historical roles assigned to women by patriarchy should be reviewed and adjusted (P19).</p>	<p>The need for empowering women in all academic courses Low presence of women in the management field (in) (I) In the marginalization of women in the field of technology in the past (in) Adjusting and revising the traditional roles of women (in) (p)</p>
<p>Over the past hundred years, women's participation in the labor force outside the home has increased in most countries, women's labor is seen as an advantage to society, and is a measure of GDP. Women's lack of access to higher education has excluded them from high-paying and high-status jobs. Women's entry into higher professions, such as law and medicine, has been delayed due to women not entering universities. Women are limited to low-paying and poor jobs or receive lower wages than men (P17).</p>	<p>Female workforce is an advantage for society (in) (I) Women's participation as a benchmark in GDP (in) (I) Exclusion of women from high-paying jobs (in) (I) Restricting women to low-paying and weak jobs (in) (I) Lower wages than men (in) (I)</p>
<p>The experience of participating in the soft skills workshop was particularly important for me. In order to achieve a job and accept the specialized responsibilities of society, in addition to having mental, physical abilities and education level, we need to acquire skills such as structured and critical thinking, negotiation, conflict management and empathy, which play a decisive role in our professional success and interactions. We are people who are affected by personal and social harm caused by lack of awareness of soft skills. These skills strengthen positive attitudes and values, prevent problems and improve mental health in society. I feel that it has led to personal empowerment, improvement of academic performance, facilitation of the education process, enjoyment of learning, ability to solve problems, ability to take on the responsibilities of real life, strengthening the civic spirit of participation and benefiting from a healthy personal and social life in us.</p>	<p>Acquiring knowledge of soft skills (in) (I) Structured and critical thinking skills, negotiation (in) (I) conflict management and empathy (in) (p) Affected by individual and community injuries (in) (I) Improving academic performance, facilitating the education process (in) (I) Enjoy learning The ability to solve problems and undertake life responsibilities (in) (I) Strengthening the participatory civil spirit (in) (p) Benefiting from a healthy personal and social life (in) (I)</p>

Code Guide: (I) Inductive - (in) In vivo (D) Deductive (P) Processing

Validity and reliability of research data: Validity, transferability, reliability and verification criteria were used to confirm the validity and reliability of the qualitative research. The transcripts were double-checked and then the transcripts of the interviews

were emailed to the participants to confirm that this is what they said in the interview. Transferability: The transferability of the findings refers to the extent to which the findings obtained from the research can be used in other fields. Most qualitative researchers, in

order to increase the transferability of their findings, try to provide others with deep, detailed and targeted explanations of the research process and the actions taken in the research field, to enable others to follow the research path and the characteristics of the studied society. In this research, by fully explaining how to choose participants, fully explaining how to conduct in-depth phenomenological interviews, describing the method of data collection, the criterion of transferability was strengthened so that the reader can make decisions about transferring information to other situations. Reliability: having a code book and giving the text of the interviews to several consultants outside the research, for independent coding and re-examination of the parts of the coded interviews, was the criterion for the

reliability of the data. In order to obtain the list of original codes and the agreement between the coders, it was used instead of the complete list of codes. Finally, the interviewees were assured that the implementation of their interview text was done with special care. The use of special care for the research topic has been suggested when people share their personal experiences (Creswell, 2014) because they may challenge the norms of their societies and not accept the traditional view. Based on this, due to the sensitivity of the interview, pseudonyms were used for all interviewees.

Research Findings

The main findings of the research are explained below based on the research questions and according to the results summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: An example of the method of extracting selective and central codes from open codes

Open codes	Axial codes	Selective code	Role in the final model
Environmental protection - land rights ownership-investment-inheritance- - divorce- Controlling the situation around you - Managing what happened - Solving problems wisely - Learning to start thinking about yourself - Bargaining at home	Sustainable development Legal advice Women's self-confidence	Social ability	Contextual
Managing the company with a male mindset - the need for women in leadership and management - the need to use women's ideas - obstacles and very slow progress in empowerment - Men's lack of belief in women's ability - Emotional and negative view of women - Women's lack of self-confidence - Women's retreat - Not giving women power and opportunities - The need for women's empowerment in all academic courses - the low presence of women in the	Adjustment of traditional patriarchy Stereotypes of women Revising the traditional roles of women	Political ability	Consequence

management field - the marginalization of women in the field of technology in the past			
Forming different classes on aspects of psychology - access to information sources - Participation in all sectors of society - participation at home - school - elections - residential management - private and public boards of directors	Participation and involvement Networking	Group ability	Interferer
training networking skills - powerful mediators - congruent networks - fostering relationships - Development of companies - supply chain - marketing practices - formation of self-directed teams Women's workforce is an advantage for society - Women's participation is a measure in GDP - Exclusion of women from high-paying and high-paying jobs - Limitation of women to low-paying and poor jobs	Financial Literacy Employment of women	Economic ability	Consequence
Structured and critical thinking skills, negotiation, conflict management and empathy, problem solving ability, strengthening the civic spirit of participation, daring, time management, goal-oriented and striving spirit, communication skills, self-care in social harms.	Soft skills Mental preparation	Mental ability	Strategies
Sexual health - the method of choosing a spouse - and the commitment of life responsibilities - the requirements of a stable relationship - under the influence of personal and social injuries - benefiting from a healthy personal and social life - the difference in the way of thinking between men and women - The beginning of empowerment from the female body - women's physical training - safety - insurance - welfare	Sexual health Health and body health	Physical ability	
Education is the gateway to women's empowerment – improving academic performance, facilitating the education process – enjoying learning	Educational counseling	Academic ability	

In Table 3, there is an example of the coding method of the second round according to the type of data and the final role of the counted codes in the final pattern. In total, the number of (300) primary codes, (35) Axial codes and (7) selective codes were collected from the research data, which are placed in categories such as clinical, strategic and consequential. In the analysis of speech texts, researchers emphasized the statistics of inductive codes.

First question: What kind of leadership and management empowerment is provided by the university through counseling and psychological services?

As can be seen in Table 3, three selection codes were obtained from the research data to answer this question, which are academic capabilities, physical capabilities and mental capabilities. The participants generally believed that the counseling and psychological services of the university, both directly in counseling centers and during formal and informal educational courses, have improved their scientific abilities, awareness and physical and physical abilities, and finally their mental and psychological abilities. They believed that if women have access without any restrictions such as education, profession and lifestyle, they will be empowered. Feeling entitled to make your own decisions creates a sense of power. Empowerment includes action to elevate the status of women through education, awareness raising, literacy, and training as well as self-defense training. Empowering women is actually equipping and giving women the opportunity to make life-determining decisions through various problems of society. Alternatively, it is a process of redefining gender roles for

women, allowing them to gain the ability to choose between recognized options that would otherwise be restricted from such ability. From the data, it is possible to define principles for determining the empowerment of women, including that in order for one of them to become empowered, they must come from the position of their disability. Additionally, a person must earn their own empowerment rather than having it given to them by an external group. Definitions of empowerment include people who have the ability to make important decisions in their lives and at the same time are able to act on them. Therefore, empowerment is a process, not a product.

In this context, for example, one of the interviewees said: Empowerment programs through counseling and university psychological services made me, as a woman, speak openly, search for solutions instead of finding fault, seek cooperation, and put collective interests over individual interests. I prefer and finally not to seek to be identified and to think collectively. In the process of empowering women, I felt that the organizational structure has changed from a pyramid to a circle. Because this structural change, while allowing us to operate with a greater degree of freedom and responsibility, considered the spirit of participation and teamwork as a major organizational value, and in the face of the pyramid structure in which nothing was done unless it was approved in advance. Yes, we would create many challenges {11}.

Second question: How can the leadership ability of female students be strengthened with counseling and psychological services?

As can be seen in Table 3, to answer this question, two optional codes were obtained from the research data, which are: 1- networking ability and 2- group ability.

Networking ability the participants generally believed that the counseling and psychological services of the university, either directly in the counseling center or indirectly, made them able to join work teams and different social networks and their ability to gain more momentum in this way. Usually, when discussing about unconscious networking, our mind goes to businesses and pyramid companies, however, it should be emphasized that networking is not an economic activity at all, but more than an economic activity, it is a social activity. In fact, in networking, the goal is not just to create a communication network to earn money, but the main goal is to have a good social life.

In this regard, one of the interviewees said the necessity of creating a network: Humans are interacting and communicating in different networks every day, from the communication network with spouse and friends to colleagues in the workplace. Having enough talent and skills is an essential part of the path to advancement, however, women need strong networks to make the most of their skills. Naturally, there is a huge difference between when your network is made up of people in a city and when it is made up of the population of a country. We should not forget that strong networking is necessary to be effective and women need to create strong communication

networks to be more effective and use their talents better {4}.

Another networking contributor said: In my opinion, networks are divided into two categories: personal and professional. Personal network consists of our spouse, friends and acquaintances. In fact, this network consists of people with whom we are connected in our personal life. Personal networking has a significant impact on the professional network, so it is necessary to learn the necessary communication skills to be present in this network and build a good personal life for ourselves. But the second consists of colleagues, bosses, employees, as well as all people who are somehow related to our work. This network mutually influences and is influenced by our personal network. To create a strong career network, women also need very important skills {12}.

When it comes to networking, many people immediately think of how to use others. However, the network is a place for human communication and no one is supposed to be used as a tool, but the goal is to help each other by forming a social communication network and make the path to reach goals smoother for each other.

One of the biggest mistakes people make when networking is reaching out to people who aren't compatible with them at all. The fact is that others are thinking about their growth and development just like us. So, the first point in networking is for women to go to people who are compatible with them in terms of social and economic status and can get help from communication with them for their own development. Women's communication networks should be such that they benefit both sides of the relationship. Networking

requires two parties agreeing and getting credit from each other and then spending it for each other.

Group Empowerment: This optional code obtained from the interviews is about doing things in a group, which is a motivational structure and increases women's perception of their independence and control. Big and fundamental changes and rapid and constructive growth and development are achieved with the help of efficient, capable and capable forces, otherwise, in the most optimistic state possible, active people in various social, economic, political, cultural, technical, engineering and... In an average way, they continue on their path without any special and prominent changes, and this situation in today's competitive world is interpreted not as standing still, but as passivity and retreat.

One of the interviewees said: Too often people think that just having a relationship is enough to progress and nothing else is needed. However, we must not forget that nurturing and maintaining the relationship is not less important, if not more important than creating it. So don't forget that a relationship, whether it is business or personal, always needs nurturing. Of course, we don't need to do extraordinary things for nurturing, and simply giving a gift or a message can show others that we care about them and remember them. {17}

Another interviewee said this about group formation and collective empowerment: We should know that today's world is a world of communication and the success of us women is tied to each other in different ways. So it is necessary to try to create healthy and efficient communication links with others. To establish these

links, we need certain knowledge and without acquiring these skills, we may not be able to become experts in our goal. So it is necessary to acquire more skills in this field as soon as possible {9}.

In order to empower women, the university should move towards decentralization. In such a way that he creates a number of teams or groups made up of employees who are connected to each other to contribute to the qualitative development of the university through communication and continuous group decisions while fulfilling their responsibilities. Although problems such as the possibility of the lack of necessary personal or academic facilities and potentials or inconsistency in implementation can affect this variable, but with all this, its major advantages such as creating more flexibility in the implementation of programs, optimal use of resources and The reduction of administrative problems of the university was easily ignored.

Forming self-managing teams is an effective method that promotes the culture of participation and strengthens the spirit of teamwork. This approach, while creating a receptive environment for women's active participation in diagnosing and analyzing individual and group problems, also provides a platform for healthy criticism to find common goals and enables them to participate in various organizational processes. Eliminating hierarchy is the main requirement for creating self-managing teams. It is only in this case that women will make optimal use of each other's skills and expertise and manage the work from start to finish. The formation of self-managing teams, through the synergy principle, while

increasing organizational communication, will lead to the efficiency of the decision-making process, reduction of operational costs, improvement of quality and, ultimately, individual and organizational capabilities.

Third question: What challenges threaten the effectiveness of counseling and psychological services in the process of leadership and management empowering female students?

From the point of view of the participants, there are variables that are directly effective in empowerment programs and the results. The most important of them can be done as follows:

1- Type of attitude: The University's attitude towards women must change. The university should always seek to discover their talents and skills and spread the principle that they should be given the opportunity to express their abilities. It is in such conditions that one can expect that major challenges such as lack of power become capable, taking orders, suggesting to do work, and reacting to creativity and construction, and the other is responsible, and everyone is responsible.

2- Accountability: The University needs students and employees who are active in solving problems and feel responsible not only for the assigned tasks but also for improving the performance of the whole complex. The requirement of this work is that the university environment has positive thoughts and is ready to accept new views while being flexible in relation to the new ideas of the employees. Implementation of effective trainings in the field of group decision-making, strengthening communication skills in

group formats, strengthening planning skills and the way of appreciating women's efforts can have tremendous effects in creating individual and organizational responsibility of women.

3- Provision of financial resources: One of the important aspects of empowerment programs is the expansion of the resources involved in it. The implementation of programs to improve women's performance requires providing and allocating part of the financial, physical and human resources of the university.

When the conditions and factors of empowerment are provided, this question is still raised that according to the conditions, how to implement this process? And what strategy should be used to achieve this process? Examining the following components will answer these questions.

A female administrator in the university expressed her experiences in this field:

It is very important for all women to contribute to organizational and academic information. The general idea is that the sharing of information by people will disrupt the work process, but the success of the university should be sought in group efforts and women's sharing of organizational information, not hoarding it! Sharing information for empowering the university is not only a necessity, but it also creates an atmosphere of trust, intimacy and responsibility among male and female students and employees. First, this sharing creates a sense of belonging, participation and ownership towards the university, and secondly, it makes women determined to use the information gained to improve individual and group performance. Acquainting them with information

about how to do work, profitability, waste, budget, market, productivity and the like, makes it possible for women to clearly understand the current state of the university and try to improve its performance {7}.

4- Determining the territory of self-management: work autonomy can be created by defining tasks. This work makes individual and organizational energy to be directed in a specific channel. Determining the scope of work includes defining the goals, roles, values and regulations that form the basis of performance improvement measures and support empowerment. By creating autonomy, employees will act more responsibly and show more creativity with more freedom of action towards specific goals. Of course, it should be noted that autonomy without conditions and limits causes disorder in the university. Freedom of action should be proportional to the type of work and responsibility assigned to women.

5- Empowering management: In the empowerment process, the manager plays the role of the link. In this sense, management is defined as the ability to create a proper balance in doing work by controlling the quality of human resource performance and giving freedom of action to employees in such a way that they show more creativity with self-management. Creativity, forward-looking, focus on work, flexibility, improving communication, responsibility, reducing tension and stress in women's work environment, improving organizational structure, creating an atmosphere of trust and confidence, group work approach, succession planning for jobs and finally increasing women's management and supervision ability. It can be considered

as one of the most important factors. An experienced participant stated:

Male managers should be facilitators. They should provide conditions that allow women to learn, grow, develop and participate in work. Of course, accomplishing this task depends on managers changing their understanding of power, because until the concept of power changes radically in their thoughts, empowerment will not be realized in the real sense. Power in traditional culture means forcing another to do work, while in the empowerment process, it means freeing women to show their capabilities {7}.

- Student-centered: Today, the range of stakeholders' expectations regarding quality and services has increased and imposed a difficult task on the university. In such a way that if you are not able to meet these expectations, you will lose the status and will drive the beneficiaries to rival universities. Acquiring knowledge about the expectations of female students and quickly responding to their requests requires the need to have capable human resources.

7- Agility and flexibility: frequent changes in technology as well as changing the mentality of stakeholders have created the need for continuous transformation in organizational strategies and plans. Based on this, the university's psychological and counseling programs should be agile and have the necessary flexibility in overcoming obstacles and taking advantage of opportunities. Existence of flexible structures, employees with multiple skills, giving importance to empowerment programs and finally creating the relevant culture are among the most important tools to adapt to new conditions in dreaming with changes.

There are inhibiting forces that act in reducing the effectiveness of university counseling and psychological programs in the empowerment process. Among them, we can point out the resistance of university employees to change, the formation of a feeling of fear of change, and the existence of a negative management attitude that equates women's freedom of action with organizational violations. Weakness of organizational culture, lack of sufficient support from managers, problem solving without women's participation, the imposition of the process and the fact that women feel that they have to accept it, lack of sufficient understanding of the situation that has arisen and the uncertainty that will arise, and finally, the absence of evaluation management. Performance in order to evaluate and improve the empowerment process can be considered as one of the most important restraining forces.

Programs that are carried out in the direction of empowering women, although they will eventually lead to excellence and qualitative growth, but there are still decision makers who consider budget allocation for such programs as an overhead and consider it an additional burden on the organization. In empowerment programs, management styles will change to leadership styles. This change is always challenging. Because it requires questioning the usual ways of working, taking risks and experimenting, focusing on team activities, increasing the scope of women's options, paying attention to new values, the desire to exchange organizational information and improve methods, which in most cases will result in strong resistance.

Fourth question: How can the university expand and improve the access of students to effective counseling and psychological services?

In response to this question, the analysis of interviews regarding facilitating the access of women, both students and employees, to psychological programs and university counseling showed that the following requirements should be taken into account:

- Attracting the commitment and participation of all academics: once managers and employees, and female students, will believe in empowerment and its processes when they are involved in it. Therefore, they should be involved in the decisions related to this process in different ways.

- Creating clear and realistic expectations: this factor depends on the conditions of the environment and the organization and causes the direction of the empowerment process. Expectations and expectations must be logical and have the possibility of success, which is, women feel that they can achieve productivity and predetermined goals by acquiring the required skills and expertise.

- Emphasis on the importance of empowerment: women's empowerment needs the concentration of organizational ideas, therefore, it should be made the focus of activities and as much as possible, while providing the necessary facilities and budget and facilitating the processes, responsibilities should be delegated to the sub-departments.

- Minimizing bureaucracy: Empowerment programs, both during design and during implementation, should not be affected by administrative

bureaucracy, such as conducting many correspondences and meetings, because it will cause a decrease in the performance of the program and reduce the commitment of managers, experts and people involved in it.

- Delegation of authority: due to the fact that empowerment is a group work, therefore, the role of the members and their responsibilities and what is expected of them should be specified. Meanwhile, it is necessary to have a balance between powers and responsibilities. If this fit is accompanied by trust, then one can be sure that there is a necessary commitment to the program. Also, the delegation of authority can lead to the result when the work goals are clearly stated. Secondly, empowerment has been fully supported and thirdly, a platform for creativity and innovation has been provided.

The ultimate goal of empowerment is to accept and include women who are outside the decision-making process. Empowering women is the most important point that should be considered for the overall development of a healthy society. This is a great emphasis on participation in political structures and official decision-making, and in the economic field on the ability to earn income that enables participation in economic decision-making. Here is a comment from a contributor:

Many times trying to connect with a powerful medium can help us much more than trying in vain to connect with a powerful person. For example, we can connect to the person we want by contacting the admin of a page. Of course, the relationship with intermediaries should never be viewed as a tool, and just as intermediaries are supposed to help us, we should also be

able to help them in some way. In general, the goal is that we don't forget intermediaries and know that we can get a lot of help from them. In the field of empowerment, it should include more choices for women so that they can do it alone or in a group {3}.

To strengthen the psychological programs and counseling of the University for Empowerment, it will be very necessary to create the necessary motivational infrastructure. In this regard, the following are noteworthy: defining the goals and strategies of the university and explaining the role and position of female employees in its advancement, involving female employees in all work areas and creating a spirit of cooperation and teamwork, adopting appropriate evaluation methods and establishing a connection between the evaluation results with Empowerment programs, respecting the personality of female employees as active people who work towards the achievement of the organization's goals, creating an environment for training and acquiring new skills by providing learning opportunities, laying the groundwork for women's self-control and self-management.

The most important existing challenges can be examined from two aspects of management and consequences. Some managers believe that women not only do not have enough skills to carry out the assigned responsibilities, but they also do not have the necessary ability to play new roles. They believe that empowerment is inherent and not acquired, and for this reason, they oppose all the affairs and processes related to the empowerment of women or they create obstacles in the way of doing it. Some other managers believe that empowering women will

cause them to lose control of affairs. Therefore, they do not show much interest in sharing or transferring their work skills and prefer to work on tasks themselves rather than involving others.

Question 5: What are the consequences of leadership and management empowering women in the university by using counseling and psychological services?

As can be seen in Table 3, the optional code to answer this question can include political and economic capabilities, obtained from research data. The participants believed that economic empowerment increases women's rights, access to official government programs, mobility outside the home, economic independence and purchasing power. Employers are encouraged to support vocational training to help them enter formal markets. One recommendation is to provide women with more formal education opportunities that allow for higher bargaining power at home. They will have greater access to higher wages outside the home. As a result, it makes the work of women in the market easier. Strengthening women's access to inheritance, ownership and land rights is another method used for women's economic empowerment. This allows them to have better ways of accumulating the assets, capital, and bargaining power needed to address gender inequalities. Having a right to their land gives women a bargaining power they don't usually have. In turn, they gain more opportunities for economic independence.

Employment can help empower women. Many researchers believe that when examining employment, it is important to discuss the various barriers that poor women face, which make it

more difficult for them to achieve empowerment in society. It is clear how opportunities based on gender, race and class can bring about social change. Work opportunities and work environment can create empowerment for women. Empowerment in the workplace can positively affect job satisfaction and performance, having equality in the workplace can greatly increase the sense of empowerment. However, women do not have the same access and privileges in the workplace. More recommendations have been about increasing women's suffrage and the ability to run for office with a decent chance of being elected. Because women are typically associated with childcare and household responsibilities, they spend less time entering the labor market and managing their own businesses. Policies that increase their bargaining power within the family include those that allow women to control resources (such as property rights). However, participation is not limited to the realm of politics. This can include being involved at home, in schools and being able to make choices for yourself. Some believe that bargaining power and authority within the household must be achieved before moving toward broader political participation.

Practical suggestions

The results showed that there are different ways that universities can help female students to become more capable for leadership and management positions. In this regard, some practical suggestions are described here:

1. Mentoring programs: Many universities have mentoring programs that connect female students with successful female alumni or professionals in their field of study.

These mentors can provide guidance, counseling and support to help female students develop leadership skills and achieve their career goals.

2. Leadership Preparation Programs: Many universities offer leadership programs designed to help students develop leadership skills, such as communication, problem solving, and decision making. These programs often include workshops, seminars, and classes on topics such as conflict resolution, diversity and inclusion, and effective team management.

3. Networking events: Universities can organize networking events where female students can meet alumni and professionals in their field of study. These events provide opportunities for students to build relationships and make meaningful connections that can be valuable for career advancement.

4. Skills training: Universities can offer workshops or classes on specific skills related to leadership such as public speaking, negotiation and time management. These skills can help female students feel more confident and capable in leadership positions.

5. Access to resources: Universities can provide female students with access to resources such as career boards, career counseling services, and professional development opportunities. These resources can help female students build their resumes, gain work experience, and prepare for leadership positions.

In general, universities can play an important role in helping female students become more empowered for leadership and management positions. By providing advising, leadership programs, networking opportunities, skills training, and access to resources, universities can help female students

develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed in their careers.

Ethical Considerations

During the implementation of this research and the preparation of the article, all national laws and principles of professional ethics related to the subject of research, including the rights of statistical community, organizations and institutions, as well as authors and writers have been observed. Adherence to the principles of research ethics in the present study was observed and consent forms were consciously completed by all statistical community.

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According to the authors of the present article, there was no conflict of interest.

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Appendix 1 interview protocol

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word empowerment?

2. How do you evaluate the status and quality of management and leadership in education in Iran?

3. To what extent is the field of women's participation in the management and leadership processes of the education system available? (The number of women in senior management and policy positions)

4. What causes and factors do you consider effective in weakening the participation of women in the management and leadership of education? Why is the presence and

participation of women in managerial positions low?

5. What actions have universities taken to increase the participation of women in management positions and what programs and policies have they put on the agenda? Describe your experiences as a woman.

6. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of these programs and policies?

7. How important do you consider the role of psychology and counseling service centers in universities in women's managerial empowerment?

8. What solutions can psychological service and counseling centers have in universities? What experiences do you

have in using it to improve women's management and leadership ability?

9. What obstacles and factors threaten the effectiveness of psychological and counseling service centers in universities in the process of women's managerial empowerment?

10. What should universities do to increase women's access to psychological and counseling services?

11. In general, what is your assessment of the performance and services of counseling and psychology?

12. What are the consequences of women receiving such services on the university and society? How can more women be encouraged to use such services? Why should such services be more for women

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