

# Employees' Attitude Toward Women Managers in the UAE: Role of Socio-Demographic Factors

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Article abstract

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The findings of the study are parallel to previous works such that age, work experience, and educational level found support to the hypothesized relationship whereas gender and marital status did not. Limitations and future direction along with practical implications and recommendations are also given to draw suitable inferences.

# **Employees' Attitude Toward Women Managers in the UAE: Role of Socio-Demographic Factors**

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**Keywords:** Women Manager, Employee Attitude, Gender, Workplace and, UAE

## **1. Introduction**

In the last 30 years, countries have made significant progress in bridging the gap between genders. From multinational companies to local companies, all have tried their best to enhance their employee diversity. This to a large extent is because of socio-political, economic, and business uncertainties. Many companies have declared as ‘equal opportunity’ organizations to promote the inclusion of women in the workplace. The attempts by many progressive companies have led to the breaking of the glass ceiling and a reduction in the discrimination that exists within the organizations against women. Research on the glass ceiling has attracted researchers to explore the antecedents and consequences of attitude towards women and bridge the gap between the genders. There are models to understand the phenomenon more precisely but these models have not yielded the requisite results (Babic and Hansez, 2021).

There has been tremendous progress in women's participation in managerial fields in almost all sectors across the world. Though the participation of women is insufficient as compared to that of men, women have made significant progress. There are several reasons why women have not been allowed to occupy managerial positions – the glass ceiling and stereotyping being two of them. Women do make it to the lower level/entry-level and middle-level positions but despite having higher educational qualifications and the requisite experience, they are not given higher managerial portfolios. This could be because they lack the kind of mentoring and networking skills which men naturally possess due to socialization (Singh, 2003; Lathabhavan, R., and Balasubramanian, 2017; Jackson, 2001).

The perception about men as managers has changed over time but men and women working in offices continue to think that men are effective as managers. This holds good especially in the context of Asian countries where men have been dominating the office space and higher-level administrative positions for various socio-economic and political reasons. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has more businesswomen than other conventional Gulf regions and the proportion of women managers in the public and private organizations is also better than it is in other Gulf countries (Balgiu, 2013; Liu, and Wilson, 2001; Madsen, 2010).

On the one hand, the issue of women entering the workforce is equally important in the UAE while on the other, those who have been promoted or occupy managerial positions are evaluated perceptually by their subordinates, peers, and top management. There is a dearth of women in decision-making roles but the attitudes toward women managers in the limited labor force are of interest to researchers. There have been a few studies conducted in the Western context, but as far as the Arab world is concerned, not much has been done in this regard (Mostafa, 2005).

The purpose of this study is to understand and examine the attitudes of employees toward women as being effective at the managerial level. The study aims to capture primary data and through survey questionnaires to ascertain the various aspects of women managers and how the employees feel about their roles. The findings from the study will pave the way for further research in the areas of women, managerial positions, and leadership in the UAE. The managerial implications help bridge the gap between genders and create equitable and healthy organizations.

### **The rationale of the study**

There are liberal and progressive policies to bring women into the workplace but this is not the case where managerial positions are concerned. The statistics paint a dismal picture when it comes to women's representation in the middle level or top-level management. Only 26 percent of women

occupy senior positions in the UAE (Women in Business, 2020). The economic growth in the country put the UAE on the global map. Its increasing trade and commerce and politically stable regime indicate stable economic development in the region. The emergence of a growing economy is a good sign for the development of the country but a good percentage of men hold the belief that women are good at domestic chores rather than in managerial positions. Despite such beliefs, a small but significant number of women have risen to leadership positions. It is important to also know what kind of role and identify UAE women managers make in their career life.

### **Context of the study**

The UAE is at a juncture where its female representation at universities is on a par with that of males. The access to higher education by females in the country and their representation in employment is also gaining ground but there are few leadership positions open to them in either the private or public sector. There is a lower percentage of women when it comes to top positions in the public sector (36%) and the private sector (26%). Hence, there is a need to understand this growing gap between men and women where leadership positions are concerned and why women are not able to occupy managerial positions in both the public and private sectors? This study is being conducted to understand the factors influencing the divide between the genders when it comes to the top positions in the UAE (Kemp, Madsen, and El-Saidi, 2013).

On the one hand, the country is flourishing. There is new economic growth and several multinational corporations have signed pacts and deals to set up shop in the country and have a long-lasting business relationship with it. On the other hand, the under-representation of women in managerial and leadership positions is a subject of concern for these multinational corporations. This will not only impact the business relations but will also bring into question the veracity of the national and organizational policies of the country in the global business index (Madsen, 2010). Therefore, the context of the study becomes all the more important to examine what factors influence the role of women in managerial positions and how other social actors perceive these roles.

Tlaiss (2013) looked at the experiences of UAE women in terms of their personal and work-life aspects at the macro and meso levels in the country. With a paucity of data available on women's studies at the national and organizational level, the studies on women employees are scant. The UAE is economically the wealthiest among the league of Arab countries, and subsequent UAE governments have shown enormous commitment to transforming the country from being solely dependent on oil export to giving equal importance to industrialization and tourism. As part of the reforms, successive governments had focused on improving the standard of living of their citizens through affirmative action by increasing the representation of their nationals, particularly women, in their labor force. This commitment by the government dramatically increased the enrollment ratio of the female population in educational institutions, including in higher studies and in government employment.

Traditionally, the UAE's culture is patriarchal with most of the decisions being taken by men. Therefore, women taking up jobs outside homes is still considered to be taboo and seen as socially unfavorable attitudes toward women. The structures of organizations in the UAE have an attitudinal bias against women due to gender stereotyping. Women are discriminated against at the time of hiring, promotions, and performance evaluation based on the notion that women are more suitable for domestic jobs and do not have the competencies to become managers. The current

study draws a lot from the experiences of the employees and their attitudes toward women managers in the country.

The study aims to explore how women managers at the workplace are perceived by the employees. This study also recognizes the role other factors like religion, culture, and economics, play in the context of women managers. The context of picking the UAE is appropriate because a lot of women educated in the country are entering the workspace. More and more of the students passing out of universities are women. Expatriates comprise 90% of the population of the UAE and any development in the policies of the companies to promote women managers will have an impact on the country. The UAE is changing rapidly and some of the changes have a global impact too. It would be interesting to study how economic changes are making a direct impact on the social and cultural aspects of the country in terms of treating women at the decision-making levels in both governments as well as private organizations. The unemployment rate of women has increased to almost 25% when compared to men, which is less than 10%. Interestingly, the overall contribution of Emirati women in national income in the last two decades has gone up drastically. Government policies to promote women's higher education and women in the workforce are also paying dividends. At this juncture, it is equally important to know how employees perceive women managers.

## **2. Literature review and theoretical framework**

Of late, there is a good amount of literature available on women managers. These studies have been conducted largely in the western context. Although attempts have been made to replicate these studies in the Asian context, especially in emerging and growing economies, there is a dearth of empirical studies in this regard.

### **Glass Ceiling for Women**

Education and training have a lot to do with the employment of women. Despite the progress women have made in the educational field, a subtle glass ceiling continues to stop their progress and growth in the employment arena. A part of the social roles of women and men are chiefly responsible for such treatment being meted out to women at the workplace. Stereotyping to discrimination based on gender is an intangible but evident phenomenon seen even in modern-day organizations. A few policy decisions have been made to increase female employment through affirmative action and special drives. Although these efforts have yielded results, they have not been sufficient to break the silos that exist in organizations and society. The glass ceiling leads to vertical discrimination against women which prevents them from reaching higher positions. It is a conscious and unconscious practice that has stopped the upward mobility of qualified women to allow them to reach their highest potential despite their having all the requisite educational qualifications and experience.

According to Babic and Hansez (2021), a glass ceiling does continue to exist in organizations. In their study, the authors looked at the antecedents and consequences of the glass ceiling. They considered several factors responsible for this vertical discrimination against women, including interpersonal and situational factors and organizational culture. As far as the consequences of these factors are concerned, the study highlighted women managers' organizational attitudes and well-being at the workplace. The study also focused on the work and family life conflict in a relationship with a glass ceiling. The findings from the study revealed that the lack of organizational support and mentors restricted women when it comes to climbing up the

ladder to higher positions in the organization. Women also tend to receive little or no communication about the growth opportunities as they are generally not part of the social network of their organizations. It is in these networks that such growth and promotional activities are discussed and implemented. This study did try to fill the gap that exists in modern organizations about the glass ceiling by bringing the work and family conflict and well-being variables into the discussion. Often, the existence of the glass ceiling has adverse consequences with women being dissatisfied with their jobs or deciding to quit altogether.

Arab women do face similar problems at the workplace due to interpersonal and situational factors as the culture of the UAE is mostly male-dominated and there are few opportunities open for women to take up a career option. In another study, Jackson (2001) observed that women in the USA occupied half of the workforce but continued to face discrimination. Women are underrepresented in many middle-level to higher levels jobs in the USA including federal jobs. Fortune companies have a similar graph where the women do not figure in the higher managerial positions. Career advancement of the employees has been seen as a personal development than organizational support. Women have fewer career advancement opportunities on the one hand, while perceived organizational support from the current employer for them to occupy managerial positions is also not encouraging, on the other. Results from the study show that women still face glass ceiling issues within organizations, as a result, gender justice is compromised in organizations.

Lathabhavan and Balasubramanian (2017) looked at the glass ceiling and women employees in Asian companies. This study reviewed and analyzed different glass ceiling studies in the Asian context in the 30 years since it originated. While this study also presented the antecedents and consequences of the glass ceiling, it looked at the practice through reports published by international organizations too. The methodology used in the study focused on the published reports from international agencies which gave a good understanding and segregation of data related to the glass ceiling region-wise. Factors responsible for the glass ceiling were identified with different associated theories. This study has helped in bringing up the issue of the glass ceiling in Asian countries and organizations, which in turn has helped policy and decision-makers to devise strategies to break the glass ceiling. The study has also shed light on how women should be empowered to root out social evils like the glass ceiling. The understanding and knowledge of culture play an important role in devising a robust policy to get rid of the glass ceiling.

There is a change in the perception of others toward the female workforce, but the subtleties of discrimination and challenges faced by women at the workplace are still aplenty. Orser (1994) reviewed the growing nature and extent of the sex role in the Western context, particularly in the USA. There is a great amount of increase in sex roles due to the legislation banning sex discrimination in employment practices. The sample for the study was drawn from American business and non-business background students to examine the extent to which sex-role stereotyping occurs in the selection and socialization information of attitudes toward women. Findings from the study reflect the similarities and differences between the USA and the UK and West Germany. Some interesting revelations have come to the notice of the decision-makers through this study. Sex roles form the attitudinal construct for many students. Whereas male business students tend to believe they possess the necessary managerial skills to succeed, female business students believe both men and women are likely to possess the requisite characteristics to be successful at managerial jobs. The study did not find support for attitudinal reflection with the selection process.

Women and men enjoy different rights and privileges when they attain higher positions. In one study, Al Ahmadi (2011) reviewed the role of Saudi women in a top leadership position and the challenges they faced compared to their male counterparts. With the growing demand for women's education, a lot of Saudi women have managed to get higher education. As result, many of them have successfully entered the workforce and a few have also made it to the higher job roles but the challenges they face are completely different from those of their male counterparts. These challenges range from personal to cultural and affect their leadership role in a big way. The sample drawn from 160 women leaders identifies various challenges that women leaders face in the public sector in the country. Findings from the study indicate that structural issues, lack of adequate resources, and the unwillingness of authorities to empower women to reach higher levels are the major reasons inhibiting the upward mobility and managerial success of women, apart from cultural and personal reasons. This study did provide some recommendations to overcome structural challenges to enhance the role of leadership in women. The situation is quite closer in the UAE than that of Saudi Arabia in terms of women's representation. There are more qualified women in the country ready to occupy their dream jobs but personal and cultural factors apart from organizational factors, lack of empowerment and resources keep them from fulfilling their aspirations, (Miller, Kyriazi, and Paris, 2017; Kemp, 2013; Madsen, 2010; and Gallant and Pounder, 2013).

Complementing the earlier studies, Kemp, Madsen, and El-Saidi (2013) researched the female leadership in the United Arab Emirates to discover the state of affairs among the top-level management, particularly among women on boards as CEOs, Vice presidents, unit heads, etc. The investigation by the authors was done through quantitative gender analysis of 954 organizations from the public database and the sample was drawn from the Middle East and North African region. Findings from this research indicated that women were not as fully represented as men in senior positions in companies. However, women were found to have departmental leadership in the hospitality industry and in small public sector companies. The study has a lot of implications for policymakers which they can use to devise and design programs to empower women to take up leadership positions in the country (Omair, 2008).

### **Attitude towards Women Managers**

Women managers are seen differently by different actors in society. The males' perspective, although changing due to education and awareness, is entirely different from that of females. Lewis (2010) reported the results of a longitudinal study that compared the attitudes of business undergraduate students toward women managers. The study compared the results drawn from the years 1981, 2000, and 2010. During all these years of investigation, women showed more positive and significant attitudes toward women managers than their male counterparts. Further, the study also probed females' attitudes in different years of their attitudes. Compared to 1981, women in the year 2000 showed a more positive attitude toward women managers. On the other hand, there was a difference found in women's attitude toward women managers between 2000 and 2010. Interestingly, there was a change in the attitude of men from 1981 to 2000. However, there was a shift from 2000 to 2010 in the attitude of men toward women managers. This research has triggered a positive change in men's attitude toward women managers.

In another study, Liu and Wilson (2001) studied the perception of women managers and the challenges they faced at the workplace. The study also identified various issues and problems faced by women on a day-to-day basis in multinational corporations and the impact across the country. The major issues identified were age, gender, and family responsibility. Interviews and

focus group discussions with the respondents revealed that women faced various problems at the workplace. This revelation brought about significant changes in the policies for women and their implementation for women empowerment in multinational corporations and the perception of women at the workplace.

Terborg, Peters, Ilgen, and Smith (1977) discussed the measurement issues related to women managers at the workplace. In their study, the authors used a sample of 280 employees – 180 males and 100 females. The data also examined the relationship between age, sex, salary, and promotions to learn about stereotyping behavior in the workplace. Findings from the study indicated that personal data like age and sex were related consistently to the attitudes toward women managers whereas organizational data like salary and promotion were not. This is one of the foremost studies to validate the scale and measurement issues related to women managers.

Stevens and DeNisi (1980) did a replication study with university business students to get to know the attitudes and attributes for performance for women managers. The sample studied was 143 male and 83 female students. A fictitious female manager profile and description were created to judge the success and failure of the woman manager using the WAMS scale. Four possible causes, namely, ability, effort, luck, and nature of the job, were given for the manager's success and failure. An analysis of the result revealed that both men and women attributed success and failure to similar factors. In another study related to the performance of women managers in a different context, Singh (2003) reviewed the literature on the subject of women in management and their performance. Analysis indicated that the set of articles used for examination has three categories – work-life balance, gender inequality, and the glass ceiling. Each category has a few subcategories and the most popular category in the Indian context is work-life balance. There are many studies in the Asian context on the subject of women managers.

One such study was conducted in the context of China by Bowen, Wu, Hwang, and Scherer (2007). Being the manufacturing hub of the world, China attracts huge investments from multinational corporations. Despite heavy activities from China, there's little information available about Chinese culture, especially the perception of women as managers in the Chinese context. To bridge this gap, the authors have empirically investigated and compared attitudes toward women managers among students and workers. The results of the study indicate that women have more positive attitudes toward women managers than men do. Further analysis of the data between older and younger men revealed that they do not differ much when it comes to women managers. On similar lines, a few more studies were conducted in other parts of Asia. Ali, Khan, and Munaf (2013) investigated the difference in attitudes toward women managers between male and female employees in Pakistan. From an equal sample of men and women, the data indicated there was no significant difference between men and women when it came to women managers in Pakistan. Further analysis of the data revealed that males living in joint families had negative sex-role stereotypes of women managers whereas men living in nuclear families had neutral and positive attitudes toward women managers. Interestingly, men with working mothers had a positive attitude toward women managers compared to those whose mothers were homemakers.

The situation is no different in the UAE. Mostafa (2005) investigated the attitudes toward women managers held by 186 Emirati samples. They were administered a well-established scale on the aversion to women who work. Results from the study revealed that the younger generation has a different attitude toward women managers compared to the older generations. Apart from that, there are also significant differences between men's and women's perceptions about the role of women in UAE society. The study predicted that modernity might diminish the patriarchal



mindset toward women managers soon. This is one of the important studies to probe the attitudes of men and women and the old and new generations toward women managers in the UAE.

A summary of the literature review discussed in this paper is presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Brief Summary of the Literature Review**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Stevens, and DeNisi	1980	To replicate one of the previous studies to check the success or failure of a fictional female manager in the 1st year of her job, using the Women as Managers Scale (WAMS).	Both males and females attributed success and failure to ability, effort, luck, and nature of job factors
Singh	2003	The objective was to analyze the gap between the effectiveness of women managers and the perception of their effectiveness.	The findings show that even in a group of successful women managers, there is still a gap in perception about performance and actual performance of the women managers.
Lathabhavan, R., and Balasubramanian	2017	The objective of the study was to review and analyze different glass ceiling studies looking at their antecedents and consequences.	The perception of the glass ceiling existing in Asian countries has been sorted region-wise.
Jackson	2001	This study investigated how women in middle management perceived their career advancement opportunities and thought about the organizations supporting their careers.	The glass ceiling is a major issue for women within organizations for their career development.
Balgiu	2013	The paper investigated the attitudes toward female managers, from the perspective of employees, non-employees, and students.	The findings reveal that male employees and non-employees have less favorable attitudes toward female managers than women.
Liu and Wilson	2001	The objective of the paper was to investigate the perception of women as managers and the obstacles that they face in multinational corporations.	Age, gender, and family responsibility play important roles in the perception. There's less change in employers' perception of working women.
Madsen	2010	The objective of the study was to find the influences of Arab women leaders in the UAE.	Findings from the study reveal that Arab women faced a lot of struggles and obstacles in the early stages of their careers in achieving leadership positions.

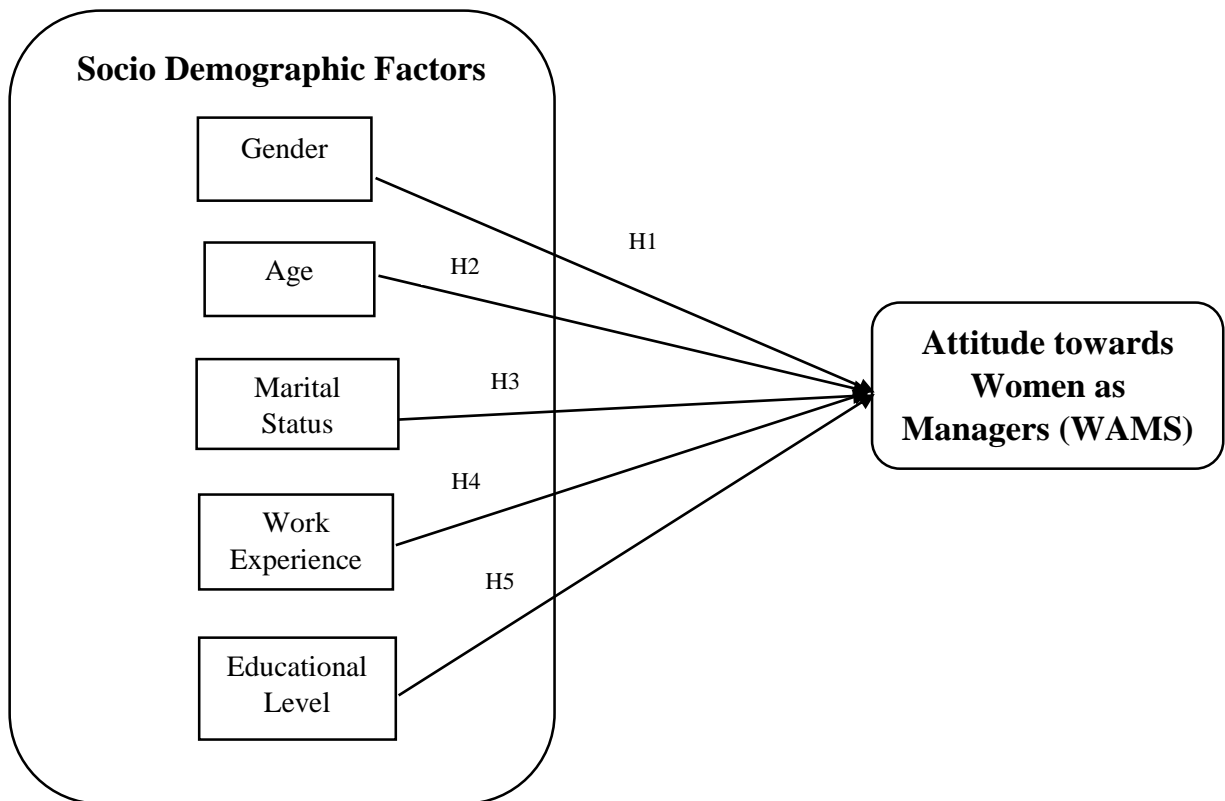
Mostafa	2005	The study aimed to investigate the United Arab Emirates (UAE) society's attitudes towards women managers.	There are significant differences in the perceptions of male and female roles in Emirati society.
Babic and Hansez	2021	The purpose of the study was to find the antecedents and consequences of the glass ceiling and vertical discrimination against women in companies.	The results show that Work-Family Conflict mediates the effects of the glass ceiling on job strain and job engagement, and partially mediates the effects of the glass ceiling on job satisfaction and intention to quit.
Kemp, Madsen, and El-Saidi	2013	The paper aimed to find women in senior business leadership positions in the UAE.	Women are still underrepresented in the senior company and top department leadership positions.
Lewis	2010	The purpose of the paper was to compare the results of a longitudinal study about the attitudes of business undergraduate students toward women as managers.	It was found that females report significantly more positive attitudes toward women as managers than males.
Tlaiss	2013	The purpose of this paper is to explore the career success of women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The paper examines the interplay of some of the macro-national and meso-organizational factors in explaining the micro-individual experiences of career success.	The findings from the study reveal how local cultural values, societal expectations, and organizational attitudinal and structural factors influence the experiences and the conceptualizations of career success of women.

### 3. Theoretical framework and hypotheses formulation

After a systematic and comprehensive literature review, some clear gaps emerged in the research on women managers in organizations using different constructs and variables. Previous studies have examined women managers in terms of patriarchy, sex-role stereotypes, job satisfaction, and scale development. In this study, we have studied the perceptions and attitudes of employees toward women managers using socio-demographic factors (Mostafa, 2005).

Employees' attitudes toward women managers have been empirically examined in several studies (Mostafa, 2005; Bowen, Wu, Hwang, and Scherer, 2007; Asia. Ali, Khan, and Munaf, 2013; Singh 2003). To provide the rationale in this regard, one of the most prominent approaches is the 'Social Learning Theory' (Bandura, 1977). The social learning theory considers the concept of learning by observation. This theory has been used in the studies of attitudes of employees toward women managers as learning by observation of social actors in the organization is at the heart of the theory. In the context of the workplace, this theory proposes that social attitudes or behaviors are the results of a learning process. The purpose of this observation is to learn how people behave among themselves in an organizational setting. These learning by observation relationships are formed because of the ways in which the organizations treat their employees (Lewis, 2010). The learning by observation theory suggests that employees' socio-demographic variables influence how employees behave with one another. It implies that employees will respond favorably or unfavorably based on the environment they come from. When employees perceive the kind of social environment that prevails in the organization, they are committed to comply and oblige to the organization demands (Bandura, 1977). This could be in terms of a favorable attitude or display of behavior. On similar lines, when employees perceive that certain women managers are working efficiently, they feel they are also capable of demonstrating better managerial effectiveness. Also, when employees perceive that women managers have positive support from the employers or the management, they themselves exhibit favorable attitudes and behaviors – showing job satisfaction, vitality, and organizational commitment, besides perceiving the organization as being supportive (Ibrahim and Perez, 2014).

The definition of learning by observation, which is one of the parts of the social learning process can be reiterated here: "People learned through observing others as role models. Learning a new behavior does not automatically mean the individuals will execute it. Changing to a new behavior must have value to the individual so that he/she wants to apply what they have learned. Individuals' 'beliefs, feelings, attitudes and, intentions' about their social surroundings will be influenced by the social conditions prevailing in an organization (Gulhat, 1990). The theoretical framework stands on this rationale.



**Fig. 3.1: Theoretical Framework of Socio-Demographic Factors and Attitude towards Women as Managers**

**Relationship between Gender and Attitudes toward Women managers**

The effects of gender on the attitude toward women managers are well established. It is observed that women tend to show a positive attitude toward women managers compared to men (Mostafa, 2005; Gulhati 1990). This has been consistent across studies conducted in the Asian and western contexts. Gender differences are clear and visible in socio-economic and lifestyle conditions across the globe, and more so in the Arab world where gender-defined roles still prevail in society as well as in organizations. Earlier studies have pointed out how gender affected office relationships and the upward mobility of women to reach a leadership position. Women employees who have a better understanding of this bias tend to have a positive attitude toward women managers more than men do as many men believe that women are more suited to household chores than office work (Mostafa, 2005).

Previous studies suggest that gender does play an important role in determining the attitudes toward women managers. These studies were empirically tested for gender differences in attitudes toward women managers. It is believed that women tend to respond more favorably to women managers than men. In many studies, it was found that females tend to be more liberal toward women managers because traditionally, males tend to hold more negative views of female managers than male managers. This attitude of ‘think manager, think male’ has prevailed across

countries and industries for several decades. Furthermore, research has shown that individuals maintain and promote attitudes that reflect their economic status, class, and position. The extent to which females and males are positioned differently in organizational roles, such that females are thought to be incompetent managers whereas males are considered to be effective managers (Mostafa, 2005; Singh, 2003; Stevens, 1980; Gulhati, 1990). Hence, the following hypothesis:

***H1: Gender influences the attitude toward women managers***

**Relationship between Age and Attitudes toward Women managers**

The social learning theory proposed by Bandura (1977) deals with the concept of learning by observation. Age does play an important part in learning behavior as children and the young learn by observing others. Age has been used by many researchers as a control variable to check the attitude toward women managers in organizations (Singh, 2003; Gulhati 1990). Age is considered to be one of the consistent predictors of the attitude toward women managers such that there is a difference between the attitudes of youngsters and that of older employees toward women managers. There's a curvilinear relationship that exists between the age of the employees and their attitude toward women managers. Some studies suggest that older employees have a negative attitude toward women compared to younger employees (Tlaiss, 2013).

The younger generation tends to accept women managers more easily. Previous studies have shown findings in this direction. Young males and females in the age group of 35 were showed more acceptance of women managers. The difference in generations in terms of preference can be attributed to the socialization process these youngsters go through as children, which in turn has affected the image and development of women's role in society at large. Older employees tend to think of women as weak when it comes to managerial positions. This is because it is difficult to change the beliefs, values, and attitudes of the old employees. The longer an attitude is held, the harder it becomes to change (Mostafa, 2005; Elamin & Omair, 2010; Bowen, Wu, Hwang, and Scherer, 2007; Gulhati, 1990). Thus, we postulate the following hypothesis:

***H2: Age influences the attitude toward women managers***

**Relationship between Marital Status and Attitudes toward Women managers**

There is a reasonable body of research that shows that the attitude of employees toward women managers is influenced by the different stages of life of employees. There is a curvilinear pattern to the marital status of the individual employees working in organizations whereby hold strong views about women in managerial positions during pre-marriage and post marriage. It is believed that men tend to change their attitude toward women managers after marriage, more so if their spouse is also a working woman. There is thus, a change of attitude before and after marriage. (Mostafa, 2005).

There are limited studies that have dwelt upon marital status and positive and negative responses toward women managers. We expected marital status to play an important role in determining the attitudes of the respondents. Most of the beliefs held by people are either borrowed from tradition or learned through friends; there is no experiential, firsthand knowledge about women managers. When people get married, they tend to know more about women than in the

pre-marital period. We believe that people who are married tend to accept women managers more easily than those who are unmarried or single (Mostafa, 2005; Singh, 2003; Ali, Khan and Munaf, 2013; Stevens, 1980; Gulhati, 1990). Hence, we believe that married men show a more favorable attitude toward women managers than unmarried men.

***H3: Marital status influences the attitude toward women managers***

**Relationship between Work Experience and Attitudes toward Women Managers**

There are inconsistent and insignificant results in the research for work experience as a predictor of attitude toward women managers (Lewis, 2010). Work experience may impact the attitude toward women managers of employees who have several years of experience and held various positions. During their tenure, these employees would have worked under different managers, both men, and women, and their perception toward women managers also changes over time with their work experience. Employees with more work experience tend to have a positive attitude toward women managers compared to those who have joined the workspace more recently (Miller, Kyraizi, and Paris, 2017).

Evidence from the previous studies revealed that work experience plays a crucial role in determining attitudes toward women managers. Those who have work experience understand and know the organization's work culture and would have interacted with women managers in different situations. Hence, they tend to believe that women managers are effective and accept them. On the other hand, freshers with no experience tend to carry the same old belief system that they adopted as part of their childhood socialization (Kemp, 2013; Mostafa, 2005; Singh, 2003; Ali, Khan and Munaf, 2013; Stevens, 1980; Liu, and Wilson, 2001) Therefore, in light of the argument just seen, we formulated the hypothesis:

***H4: Work Experience influences the attitude toward women managers***

**Relationship between Educational Level and Attitudes toward Women managers**

Previous studies have reported the significant effects of educational level on attitudes toward women managers (Cortis, R. and Cassar, 2005). But some studies have reported that an increase in educational levels may not lead to a positive attitude toward women managers (Itani, Sidani, and Baalbaki, 2005). There are also several studies that have pointed out that educational levels have no bearing on the attitudes of the employees toward women managers, while there a few research works that say education plays an important role in changing the mindset and attitude of employees toward women managers such that with the new knowledge and awareness gained during the formal educational process, some of the firmly held beliefs wither away and a change of attitude can happen (Mostafa, 2005).

Education is another factor that plays an important role in learning about attitudes toward women managers. People who are highly educated tend to hold the view that women managers are effective and efficient and give a favorable response when asked. On the other hand, people who have had little or no education believe that women managers are ineffective and inefficient. There is evidence in the literature to show education is an important variable to predict attitude toward women managers. (Mostafa, 2005; Singh, 2003; Stevens, 1980; Gulhati, 1990). Thus, we expect a

significant relationship between education and attitudes such that the more educated a person is, the more favorable attitudes he/she will have toward women managers:

*H5: Educational level influences attitude toward women managers*

#### **4. Research methodology**

The study used quantitative data techniques to find answers to the proposed research question and hypotheses formulated.

##### **Research Design**

After formulating the hypotheses from the literature, the study gathered data from the employees of public and private organizations in the UAE which is the population for the study. The target population for the present study was employees working in government-registered companies – both government as well as private. A simple random sampling was used to get the representation from the target population where women managers are working in the organizations.

##### **Sample & Data Collection**

The data was collected from different parts of the UAE, to represent an overall outlook for the country, which is considered to be progressive in its attitude toward women. The UAE has many women managers, both local and expatriates, who have been working for quite some time. The data were collected between March 2021 and June 2021. The study followed a cross-sectional approach to gather data from employees whose manager is a woman. After initial filtering and removing of unusable responses (37 respondents), the data was collected from 213 respondents comprising 79% females and 21% males with 0 to 21 years of experience. The respondents were single, married, and divorced. The details of the data are presented in the Results Analysis section.

The study aimed to collect the questionnaire response through an established scale with no modifications to suit the context of the study. As many as 10 times the number of items of the scale were used as a parameter to get the sample. A structured questionnaire with 21 attitudinal items, including the demographic variables, was administered to the respondents through online (160 responses) and offline (53 responses) modes. Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert type scale where '7' indicates strongly agree, '6' indicates agree, '5' indicates somewhat agree, '4' indicates neither agree nor disagree positions, '3' indicates somewhat disagree, '2' indicates disagree, and '1' indicates strongly disagree.

##### **Normality of the data**

The normality of data was measured through two numerical measures, namely, Skewness, and Kurtosis. The range for Kurtosis values between -7 and +7 indicates that the data points are normally distributed (DeCarlo, 1997) and for Skewness, the more the values of data points closer to 0, the more symmetrical is the distribution, it ranges between -3 and +3. For the present study, most of the values for items are in the defined range, and hence, it reflects that the majority of the items were normally distributed.

**Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
<b>Age of the respondents</b>			
21- 25	0.0281	0	1
26- 30	0.338	0	1
31- 35	0.4647	0	1
36- 40	0.1408	0	1
41 and above	0.0281	0	1
<b>Education of the respondents</b>			
High School	0.0281	0	1
Bachelors	0.6197	0	1
Masters	0.0281	0	1
Others	0.07	0	1
<b>Experience of the respondents</b>			
0 to 3	0.1971	0	1
4 to 10	0.0592	0	1
11 to 15	0.0169	0	1
16 to 20	0.0845	0	1
21 and above	0.14	0	1
<b>Marital Status of the respondents</b>			
Single	0.4366	0	1
Married	0.5352	0	1
Divorced	0.0281	0	1
<b>Gender of the respondents</b>			
Female	0.7881	0	1
Male	0.2112	0	1
<b>Observation</b>	<b>213</b>		

When the independent variables are categorical in nature the correlation amongst them must not be of any significance while running any multivariate analysis such as regression. This is because the categories are completely related to each other and may not demonstrate any variance. This could also result in perfect multicollinearity and hence the intercept must be included in the model as a benchmark category (Gujrathi, Porter, and Guansekaran, Ed. 5, 2012; Hair, Page & Brunsveld, 2019). The model represented in the present study includes the intercept because each hypothesis is drafted to check the differential impact.

### **Measures**

The independent variables of this study are the socio-demographic factors – gender, age, marital status, work experience, and educational levels. While there are many other socio-demographic factors like income, household ownership, etc. in the literature, we found these 5 the most suitable for our study and support the previous research (Mostafa, 2005).

The dependent variable of the study is the attitude towards women managers. It is measured through various instruments by different researchers but the highly reliable and



validated measure is WAMS. The well-established measure of the Women as Managers Scale (WAMS) developed by Peters, Terborg, and Taynor (1974) has been used. This scale has been tested in many contexts by several researchers from time to time. The scale has 21 items. Of these 21 items, 11 items are negatively worded and hence are reverse coded (See Appendix).

## 5. Results analysis

For analysis of the data, the study used Microsoft Excel for initial filtering of the data and SPSS software 26.0 version for further inferential statistics.

### Testing of Hypotheses

Since the data were significantly satisfying the normal distribution norm, we used parametric techniques to test the hypothesized relationships. We also tested the data for multicollinearity.

### Multicollinearity

In Chapter 10 of their book, *Basic Econometrics*, Gujarathi, Porter, and Guansekaran (Ed. 5, 2012) say that in the presence of multicollinearity, the estimates of the model are Best Linear Unbiased Estimators if the multicollinearity is low. This implies multicollinearity is a problem only if it is high perfect. However, if the independent variables are perfectly correlated, the OLS estimators of the model become indeterminate. One way to determine this is through calculating the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The acceptable VIF values range between 4 and 10 (Hair, Page, & Brunsveld, 2019). For the present study, they range from 1.106 and 1.713. Therefore, all the values fall within an acceptable range.

**Table 5.2: Multicollinearity**

	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
Gender	.903	1.107
Age	.604	1.655
Marital Status	.904	1.106
Experience	.584	1.713
Educational Level	.809	1.236

The results of the regression analysis show that, overall, the model was significant with  $n=213$ ,  $p < .001$ , and  $F \text{ value}=6.289$ . The value of Adjusted  $R^2$  was found to be .111. The present study considered the Adjusted  $R^2$  (coefficient of determination) as the Goodness of Fit measure. Thus, the model significantly explained 11.1% standard deviation change in the mean value of the outcome variable i.e., perception of women as managers at 99% level of confidence (See Table 5.3). Next, we discuss the results of regression analysis for each of the five hypotheses tested. Three out of five hypotheses were supported. H1, H2, and H4 were supported. However, H3 and H5 were not supported.

It is noteworthy that all the predictor variables considered in the study are categorical. As such, the objective of including such variables in the study is to check their differential impact on the dependent variable. In this case, the differential impact of gender (H1), age (H2), marital status (H3), experience (H4), and education levels (H5) was checked on employees' perception of

women as managers (WAMS). The results demonstrate that gender has a significant differential impact on employees' perception of women as managers. Thus, H1 was supported ( $\beta = -.256$ ,  $t = -3.751$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, considering female employees as the benchmark, it was inferred that males had a lower positive view of women as managers. This can be seen as the path coefficient mentioned for the hypothesis has a negative value. The results of testing H2 show a significant differential impact of age on employees' perception of women as managers. Hence, H2 was supported ( $\beta = -.282$ ,  $t = -3.383$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Results for testing H3 show no significant differential impact of marital status on employees' perception of women as managers. Thus, H3 was not supported ( $\beta = .054$ ,  $t = .786$ ,  $p < .433$ ). This implies that the employees held the same perception of women as managers irrespective of whether they were married or not. Next, the results of testing H4 show a significant differential impact of experience on employees' perception of women as managers. Therefore, H4 was supported ( $\beta = .175$ ,  $t = 2.064$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This implies that years of work experience had a different impact on their perception of women as managers. It is evident that the higher the experience, the more positive the impact. This can be validated by the positive value of the conditional path coefficient associated with the experience.

Finally, the results for testing H5 do not show any significant differential impact of education level on employees' perception of women as managers. Thus, H5 was not supported ( $\beta = .035$ ,  $t = .484$ ,  $p < .629$ ). This means that irrespective of being well educated, there is no difference in the perception of the employees of women as managers. Thus, one can see that gender, age, and experience significantly impacted employees' perception of women as managers, whereas, marital status and education level had no significant differential impact. This is an interesting finding in the UAE settings.

All the explanatory variables considered for the study are categorical. However, the outcome variable is continuous in nature. In such a case, Hair, Page, & Brunsveld (2019) suggest running a regression using the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) method. The results demonstrated in the study are accordingly showcased. The results presented are apt for the techniques used the same as in the present study.

**Table 5.3: Analysis of variance**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8.907	5	1.781	6.289	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	58.636	207	.283		
Total	67.543	212			

**Table 5.4: Regression Analysis**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.821	.201		23.992	.000
Gender	-.353	.094	-.256	-3.751	.000***
Age	-.195	.058	-.282	-3.383	.001***
Marital Status	.058	.074	.054	.786	.433
Experience	.118	.057	.175	2.064	.040*
Educational Level	.029	.061	.035	.484	.629
Observations	213				
R	.363				
R <sup>2</sup>	.132				
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.111				

b. Predictors: (Constant), Educational Level, Marital Status, Gender, Age, Experience  
 \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

**Table 5.5: Hypotheses Testing Results**

Hypotheses	The objective of each Hypothesis	Standardized $\beta$ - Coefficient	P-Value	P-Value	Results
H1	To check the direct path from Gender to WAMS	-.256	-3.751	***	Supported
H2	To check the direct path from Age to WAMS	-.282	-3.383	***	Supported
H3	To check the direct path from Marital Status to WAMS	.054	.786	.433	Not Supported
H4	To check the direct path from Experience to WAMS	.175	2.064	***	Supported
H5	To check the direct path from educational level to WAMS	.035	.484	.629	Not Supported

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between socio-demographic factors and the attitudes toward women managers in the context of the UAE work environment. The study found some significant revelations about the attitudes toward women managers, particularly with respect to age, work experience, and educational level. Out of the 5 Hypothesized relationships, the study found support for 3 (H1, H2 & H4; Gender, Age, and Work Experience respectively). The study did not find support for H3 and H5 (Marital status & Educational Level).

The study found support for Hypothesis 1, there is a significant relationship between Gender and attitude toward women managers, such that females display more favorable attitudes toward women managers than males. In the earlier studies, gender played an important role in determining the attitudes toward women managers. Our understanding from the results is that it does not matter to modern men and women who their manager is, but the score revealed that women have a more favorable attitude toward women managers than men do.

The study found support for Hypothesis 2 – there is a significant relationship between Age and attitude toward women managers. It is found that 26-30 years and 41 & above age groups do accept women managers because of their orientation and work exposure, whereas those in the age group 21-25 years still face some dilemma in their attitude toward women managers. Support was found for Hypothesis 4 – there is a significant relationship between Work Experience and attitude toward women managers. Employees having 4 to 15 years of work experience do accept women managers whereas freshers and more experienced employees' attitudes toward women are less favorable.

Our study did not find support for Hypothesis 3 – there is a significant relationship between Marital Status and attitude towards women managers. One of the reasons why our study did not find support for this relationship is it does not matter whether the employees are unmarried or married or divorced – they tend to keep their professional lives separate from their personal lives. Marital status does not play an important role in determining the attitude towards women managers (Elamin & Omair, 2010).

The study did not find support for Hypothesis 5 – there is a significant relationship between Educational Level and attitude toward women managers. Bachelor's and Master's degree holders believe that women managers are okay with them. On the other hand, those who have completed high school tend to have a less favorable view of women managers. Some of these results were contradicted and corroborated by the previous studies (Mostafa, 2005; Elamin & Omair, 2010; Bowen, Wu, Hwang, and Scherer, 2007; Gulhati, 1990).

The purpose of the study was to understand the attitudes toward women managers using demographic variables in the UAE context. The sample for the present study consisted of 213 participants. The data was collected through 21 items scale (WAMS) validated from time to time across different cultures. From the research findings, we can infer that gender and marital status do not play an important role in determining the attitudes toward women managers whereas age, work experience, and educational levels do. These findings should not be overlooked in the context of equal opportunity organizations that exist in the UAE. Females tend to show more favorable attitudes toward women managers than their male counterparts. The practical implications if implemented at the organizational level will yield better results and they can achieve gender-just status but also a healthy work environment.

The originality and contribution of the paper are threefold. First, the worth-added of this study lies in exploring women's experience bias and discrimination at the workplace, particularly at the managerial level. The previous data and results did not change much in holding this view in the UAE context. Second, the paper lies in adapting a fairly simple and easy framework that is used in gender and diversity studies, to explore and understand the socio-demographic factors that impact employees' attitudes toward women managers. Third, the paper also contributes to the limited research on the attitudes toward women managers in the UAE, the Gulf region, and Asian countries in general.

This study provides insights for teachers, research scholars, and policy practitioners to help them in designing robust training programs to elevate women to managerial and leadership positions. The study paves the way for further research to be done on the theme of attitude toward women managers and leadership positions in Asian countries.

### **Limitations & Future Research**

There are a few limitations in the study In terms of data and sample size. . Since the data is cross-sectional, it would be interesting to check the change in the attitude of the employees over some time through longitudinal studies in the future. The sample size can be extended to other Arab countries to check for some commonalities among them. Future research can look into other variables like job satisfaction and organizational commitment of these women managers. There are many other established scales to measure the attitudes toward women managers and a more robust and well-established, a validated scale can be administered to get more consistent results that can be used across populations. Further studies can explore the companies based on industrial sectors and make inferences about the different industries.

### **Implications/Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, there are several implications/recommendations that will be helpful to both government and private sector organizations in devising a gender just policy. First, the attitudes toward women managers between genders are changing fast. It appears from the study that there is growing support for women as managers but females overall have a more favorable attitude toward women managers than males do. There can be an intentional or inadvertent stereotyping of women in managerial positions. Affirmative policies can be devised to increase the overall number of women managers in organizations.

Women managers can play an active role in reducing discrimination by having a cordial and work-related relationship with male colleagues. Frequent feedback and interaction can also help to change the male employees' perceptions about women managers. The same thing applies to the new entrants. A robust organizational and HR policy for selection and promotion can reduce gender stereotyping. In a globalized environment, the participation of both genders is crucial for the overall development of the organizations and the country.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: Women as Managers Scale (WAMS) items

Item code used in the study	Item/Statement
WAMS1RC	It is less desirable for women than for men to have a job that requires responsibility. (R)
WAMS2	Women have the objectivity required to evaluate business situations properly.
WAMS3RC	Challenging work is more important to men than it is to women. (R)
WAMS4	Men and Women should be given equal opportunity for participation in management training programs.
WAMS5	Women can acquire the necessary skills to be successful managers
WAMS6RC	On average, women managers are less capable of contributing to an organization's overall goals than are men. (R)
WAMS7RC	It is not acceptable for women to assume leadership roles as often as men. (R)
WAMS8	The development community should someday accept women in key managerial positions.
WAMS9	Society should regard work by female managers as valuable as work by male managers.
WAMS10	It is acceptable for women to compete with men for top executive positions.
WAMS11	The possibility of pregnancy does not make women less desirable employees than men.
WAMS12	Women would no more allow their emotions to influence their managerial behavior than would men.
WAMS13	Problems associated with menstruation should not make women less desirable than men as employees.
WAMS14	To be a successful executive, a woman does not have to sacrifice some of her femininity.
WAMS15RC	On average, a woman who stays at home all the time with her children is a better mother than a woman who works outside the home at least half the time. (R)
WAMS16RC	Women are less capable of learning mathematical and mechanical skills than are men. (R)
WAMS17RC	Women are not ambitious enough to be successful in the working world. (R)
WAMS18RC	Women cannot be assertive in business situations that demand it. (R)
WAMS19	Women possess the self-confidence required of a good leader.



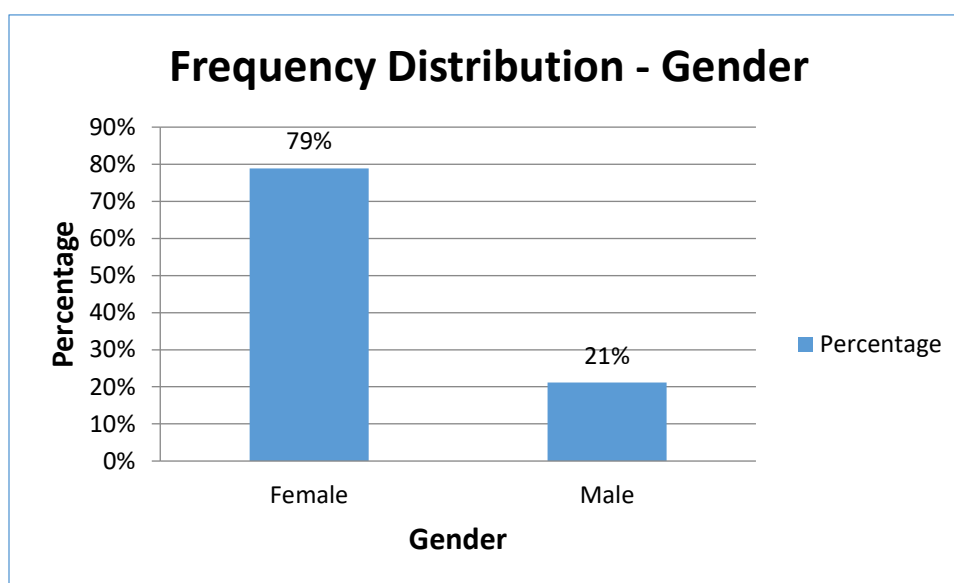
WAMS20RC	Women are not competitive enough to be successful in the working world. (R)
WAMS21RC	Women cannot be aggressive in business situations that demand it. (R)

## Appendix 2: Frequency Distribution of Socio Demographic Factors used in the study

**Table 5.1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	168	78.9	78.9
	Male	45	21.1	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	

The frequency distribution of respondents concerning gender is displayed in Table 5.1 & Fig. 5.1. It was observed that 21% of the respondents were males and 79% of the respondents were females.



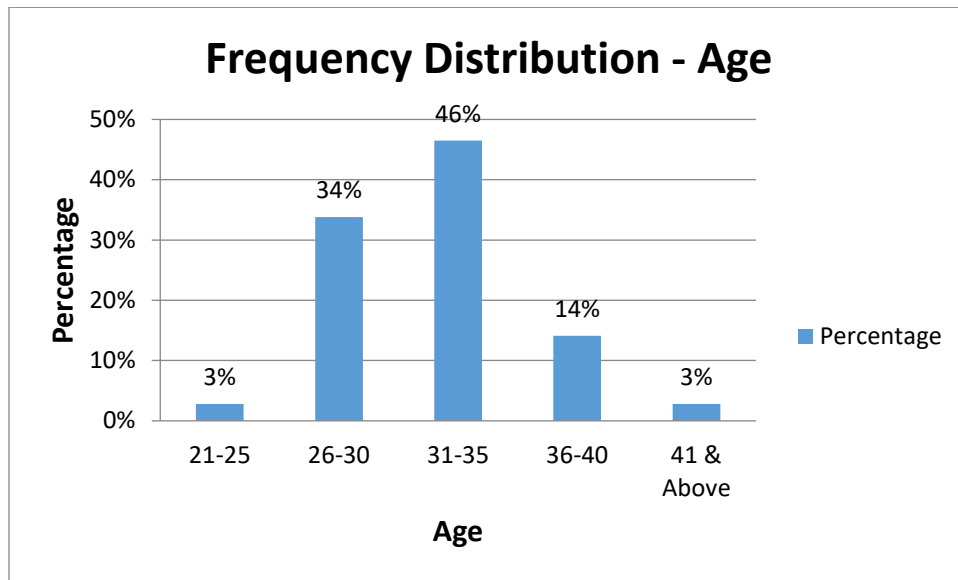
**Fig 5.1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Gender**

The frequency distribution of respondents concerning age is displayed in Table 5.2 & Fig. 5.2. It was observed that 3% of the respondents were in the category of 21-25 years of age, 34% of the respondents were in the category of 26-30 years of age, 46.5% of the respondents were in the category of 31-35 years of age, 14% of the respondents were in the category of 36-40 years of age and 3% of the respondents were in the category of 41 years and above.

**Table 5.2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Age**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	21-25	6	2.8	2.8
	26-30	72	33.8	36.6
	31-35	99	46.5	83.1
	36-40	30	14.1	97.2
	41 & Above	6	2.8	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	

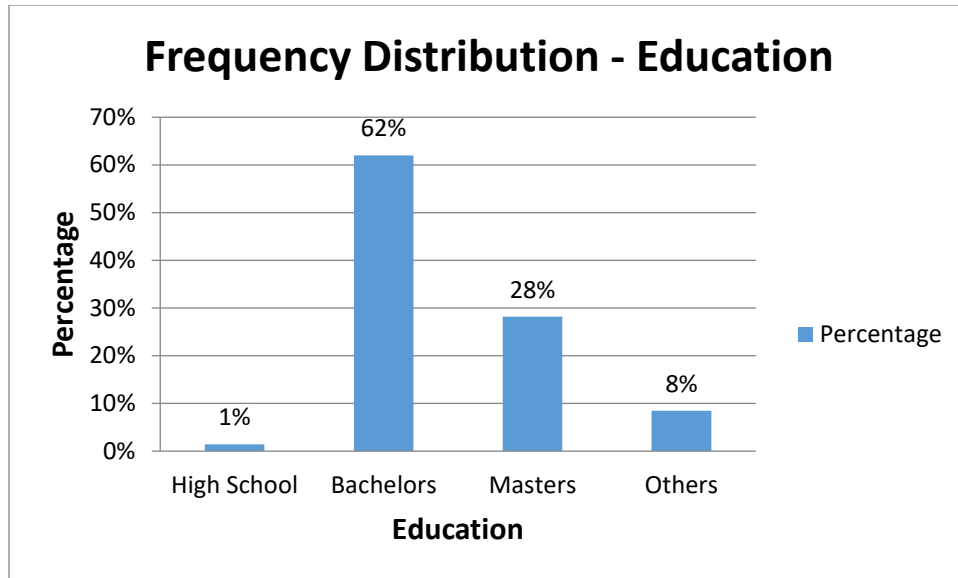


**Fig. 5.2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Age**

The frequency distribution of respondents concerning Educational level is displayed in Table 5.3 & Fig. 5.3. It was observed that 1.4% of the respondents were in the category of High school, 62% of the respondents were in the category of Bachelors, 28.2% of the respondents were in the category of Masters, and 8.5% of the respondents were in the category of Other professional qualifications like Diploma and MBA.

**Table 5.3: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Educational Level**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School	3	1.4	1.4
	Bachelors	132	62.0	63.4
	Masters	60	28.2	91.5
	Others	18	8.5	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	



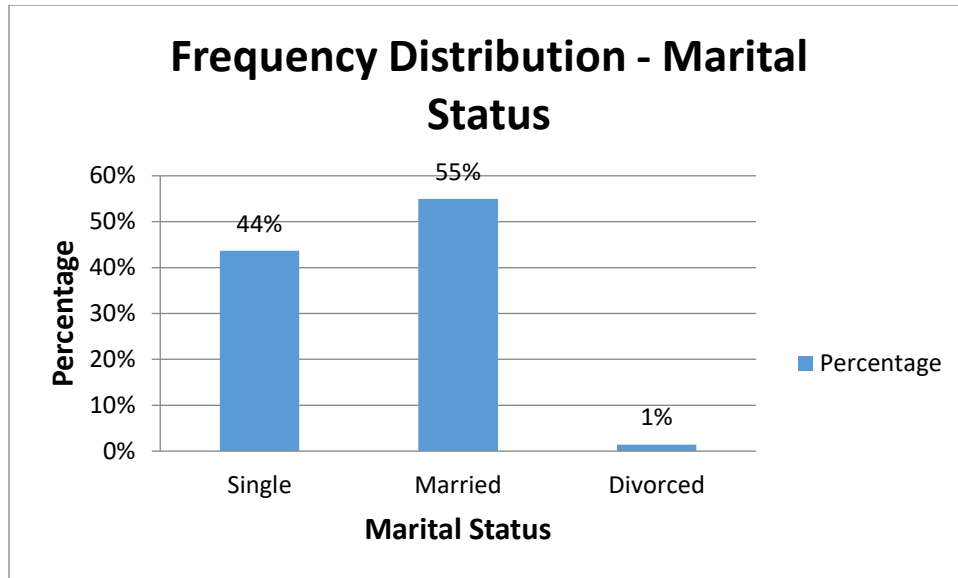
**Fig 5.3: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Educational Level**

The frequency distribution of respondents concerning Marital Status is displayed in Table 5.4 & Fig. 5.4. It was observed that 43.7% of the respondents were in the category of Single or Never Married, 55% of the respondents were in the category of Married, and 1.4% of the respondents were in the category of Divorced.

**Table 5.4: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Marital Status**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	93	43.7	43.7
	Married	117	54.9	98.6
	Divorced	3	1.4	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	

The frequency distribution of respondents concerning their marital status is presented in Table 5.4. It was observed that 76.8% of the respondents were married and 21.9% of the respondents were unmarried.

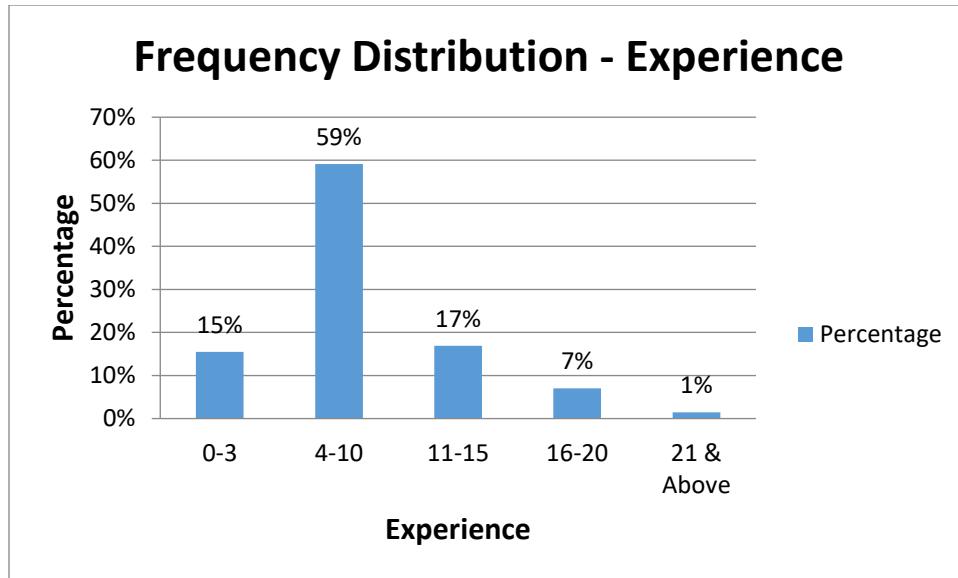


**Fig 5.4: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Marital Status**

The frequency distribution of respondents concerning Work Experience is displayed in Table 5.5 & Fig. 5.5. It was observed that 15.5% of the respondents were in the category of 0-3 years of experience, 59.2% of the respondents were in the category of 4-10 years of experience, 16.9% of the respondents were in the category of 11-15 years of experience, 7% of the respondents were in the category of 16-20 years of experience and 1.4% of the respondents were in the category of 21 years and above experience.

**Table 5.5: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Work Experience**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-3 Yrs	33	15.5	15.5
	4-10 Yrs	126	59.2	74.6
	11-15 Yrs	36	16.9	91.5
	16-20 Yrs	15	7.0	98.6
	21 Yrs & Above	3	1.4	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	



**Fig. 5.5: Frequency Distribution of Respondents as per their Employment Experience**

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