



## **The Narrative Research of Women's Semantic into Their Developmental Experiences at Senior Management Posts in Tehran City Higher Education Centers**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Today, women's serious participation in economic and business activities, along with the evolution process of their employment, has created the fundamental changes in their traditional role. The approach of women to out-of-home employment is influenced by their cultural, social, political, economic and individual systems, and the successful female managers have a unique self-concept that allows them to overcome the old gender boundaries. **Methodology:** For this purpose, an in-depth interview was used to access the narratives. The research participants comprise 20 women in senior management posts in Tehran's higher education centers who were selected through the targeted sampling. **Finding:** The findings of the study, using the theme analysis method, have identified the factors promoting the women's development in senior management positions in three themes: individual, organizational and socio-cultural, and five themes of organizing the education, family, individual characteristics, attitudes of employees and authorities, community attitudes, and the factors preventing women's development in senior management positions in three main themes of individual, organizational and cultural-social and seven themes of organizing the education, family, individual characteristics, discrimination, attitudes of employees and authorities, community attitudes, cultural stereotypes. **Conclusion:** The results of this study showed that women's perception of management positions, individual and family characteristics, staff attitudes, community attitudes, cultural stereotypes, and organizational discrimination are some barriers to women's development.

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## 1. Introduction

Modern societies are formed based on the work. The meaning of work varies from one person to another, however, it has always been an integral part of people's lives. Now, most people are consciously choosing their jobs and planning a career path that best suits their interests and abilities (Huang, 2006). Undoubtedly, women are one of the most important social groups, and the inability to exploit the potential of women in various cultural, economic, social and political fields makes it impossible or difficult to achieve the development (Alizadeh, 2010).

Women as a half of human capital and as growers of today's and tomorrow's generations are not only the subject of development, but also an effective factor in promoting the development goals (Borjali Lou et al., 2012) and with increasing the level of literacy and the development of higher education, they have become aware of their abilities and demand more contribution from family and community management (Abedi Jebli et al., 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to provide them with a wider range of social participation and to provide women with their power of all levels, especially for management and planning levels. This issue, addition to increasing the participation of women in all social areas, due to their greater awareness of the problems of women, will also possible to eliminate the barriers to women (Borjali Lou et al., 2012). However, there are many challenges for women's employment throughout history, and gender discrimination has been a factor in reducing the growth of women in organizations (Jennings & Brush, 2017).

In our country, the presence of women in small and medium-scale management positions is negligible, although women's presence in organizational management positions has become more prominent, but not in line with men; this inequality is more evident in higher education (Chin, 2011) and women have a diminished presence in high school positions, such as the university presidency, management, and deputy education (Bilen-Green et al., 2008). These organizations are generally male-dominated and female executives often struggle with the traditional views of the community about the masculinity of these roles (Christman & McClellan, 2008).

Given that universities and higher education centers are one of the most important scientific centers in producing knowledge and technology and educating the students and scientists, these organizations must always strive for excellence and perform their most important and effective task with improving the quality of service (Svensson & Klefsjo, 2006). In connection with educational centers, and in particular the universities, it has always been the question of whether women have the capacity to manage in this area (Hadidi & Kirby, 2015). Studies show that gender and existing expectations about the roles create and sustain the obstacles that prevent women from pursuing the management positions, diminish their access to these positions and prevent their success in these roles (Chin, 2011).

In the current society, although the claim of gender equality in social and human rights is universally accepted, but still there is a long gap between its rational acceptance and its implementation in practice. Our society's attitudes and values are purely patriarchal, and these values affect the community in almost all areas of social and individual life (Nejati Eti Bisha and Jamali, 2007). Despite the women's progress in universities and higher education centers, women continue to face serious barriers to high-level management positions and these socio-cultural expectations and experiences bring women with multiple identities (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) and a set of prejudices that men are not facing (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

## 2. literature Review

The statistics show that women do not use the massive power in the management field. The women not only do not have equal opportunities to be haired rather the men, but they do not have much luck in the ascent process of the development. In spite of the ever-increasing advances in the knowledge, expertise and proof of the worth and desirability, in the various sectors of society, they have had little to do with power and decision making (Jafarnejad, 2005).

Studies show that the successful female managers create unique individual behaviors that help them overcome the obstacles in higher education centers (Eli et al., 2011), but how this self-concept comes about, has taken less importance. Having a clear understanding of oneself is one of the characteristics of successful leaders and is essential for genuine managers (Avolio et al., 2009).

In the present era, universities have become important social organizations that play a major role in the country's comprehensive and sustainable development. Higher education is considered as the main source of knowledge and power and when it can prepare society for problem-solving and quantitative-qualitative development, it provides an effective management and comprehensive program. One of the basic tools to accomplish this mission is to realize the productivity of human resources in educational centers, especially the higher education center. Today, the quality should form the central axis of higher education in all its dimensions and promoting it is the most important task of higher education centers and the leadership of management is at the top of it. In this way, the academic leaders need to combine several skills to survive, and they must be thoughtful, visionary, and operational. In order to fulfill this great mission, the universities must have the ability, independence, dynamism and flexibility and adaptability to the environment, responsibility, accountability and legitimacy. In this regard, the academic leadership is undoubtedly a central and effective element in improving the situation (Sedghi Bukani et al., 2018).

Successful female executives create the special self-concept and mnagement behaviors that are beyond the expectations and gender roles. It seems that these unique features are rooted in certain experiences of life that are achieved in certain social and cultural situations (Christman & McKell, 2012). How people become leaders or how they take on management roles are essentially questions about self-reflection (Elie et al., 2011). The way in which self-concept is shaped in men and women is different because of the difference in the type of socialization (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). However, the examination of these differences alone gives an inadequate picture of the factors influencing women's leadership, because a number of women have achieved success despite this social perception or situational difference.

So far, the various studies have been conducted on the presence of women in management positions as one of the main drivers of professional development. White (2011) in a study titled "A Plan to Promote Female Leaders in the Progress of Higher Centers in Human Resource Development" concluded that the university environment was dull for senior women. The study found that one of the most important challenges for women in Australian academic environment was to influence a highly patriarchal culture. White observed that it appears that when women arrive at senior management posts in every organization, they face the patriotic power who are prepared to accompany some women, but never seek to accept their dominant and equal role. In a study done by Christians and McClean (2008), entitled "Life on Barbed Wire, Women Lead Resistant in Leadership Education Programs ", concluded that women are fighting resistance to structural views (community norms). These women are confronted with the difficulties they face. Resistant women have the patience, endurance, compassion, determination, riskiness, self-sustainability, communication, initiative, creativity and perseverance, humor, independence, and self-evaluation characteristics, and can achieve the success by these characteristics. Luke (2007) in a research entitled "Cultural Policies and Singaporean Women in High Level Scientific Management," concluded that women are faced with the cultural, economic and political issues. In fact, women can face the traditional Asian and historical attitudes, family values, lack of support for women, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem.

However, these women have managed to achieve the high levels. They believe in a participatory management approach, however, they have no desire to upgrade, because they also believe that this is a very timely one, and when they do not leave any time for research, teaching, and individual life; they prefer to work sacredly behind the scenes and make men successful.

In Iran, Shahtalabi et al. (2009), in a research project titled "Women's Experiences, Leader of Higher Education", a phenomenological qualitative study composed of eight women with significant academic positions and the information gathering method through was in-depth interviews, found that women in Iran's higher education, despite the many obstacles facing them, have been improving their management and leadership skills and have positioned themselves as managers. They have been able to push the negative outlook of society towards more positive attitudes about women. Arasteh (2008), in a study titled "The Need for Applying New Techniques among Presidents of Iranian Universities", states that there is no magic formula for leadership in Iranian universities. However, those who lead the university in collaborative, appreciation of individuals and innovation ways, can act against the rapid and unpredictable changes in academic activities. Alborzi and Khayr (2007), in a study titled "How to excel, examine the barriers and opportunities of leading academic women" with the approach of the emerging theory of experience, classified the obstacles of leading women in the four main categories which includes the categories such as social beliefs, social affairs (including equal rights and equal educational opportunities), education (in the family and in society), and expectations. They also empower women's livelihood opportunities in their three main categories (including self-reliance, effort, commitment, position diagnosis, communication skills, planning and management, and sustainability characteristics); support (the characteristics of family support, spousal support, and support for others) and changes in social and cultural changes (characteristics of the development of human society and the evolution of Iranian society).

Over the past few years, the presence of women in executive and management positions in the country has been at the center of a significant debate among the academics and policymakers and women's activists, and it is very complicated to identify the important positions for women and include many variables. Identifying the internal and external variables that affect the access of women to important positions is crucial. Women, on the other hand, have special capabilities and have soft skills in human resource management, which in today's situation is more than ever needed by organizations. (Alishiri and Kamari, 2015).

The theory of social cognition states that self-concept is shaped and modified during a lifetime. Gender concepts, roles, behaviors, and key components of self-concept are the result of the impact of family and social factors (Busie and Bandura, 1999). Most women do not see themselves as leaders and limit them for the cultural expectations (Coward, 2010). Female leaders must overcome the traditional expectations of the community that affects their self-perceptions (Van Kirk, 2005). However, less researches has looked at the factors contributing to women in creating their own thinking different from the traditional expectations of society (Asgari et al., 2012). The most researches and studies on women's management focus on gender differences, the promotion of women's occupation and. Therefore, the article uses a narrative-based approach based on stories about self-concept of successful women in the field of management, studies the understanding of semantic of women's developmental experiences in the senior management posts of Tehran's higher education centers.

### 3. Methodology

In this research, qualitative research methodology has been used to understand the semantic of women from their developmental experiences at senior management posts in higher education centers. Qualitative research is often referred to the methods used to obtain the mental data. On the other hand, qualitative research allows us to find out about the experiences and values of individuals. Denzin & Lincoln considered the qualitative methods in the 1990s to be replacing the narratives rather than the theories or to consider theories as narratives (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Narration is a way of re-negotiating past experiences by matching verbal sequences of cases, in the order of events, as it is deduced, actually happened (Gorbani et al., 2017).

Narrative research is a method of discourse studies based on the study of narrative and grounded expressions. According to Brecher & Harvey, one of the important abilities of narrative research is the gathering of data that is considered to be marginal in many research methods and thus remain useless (Brecher & Harvey, 2002). Narrative research, in fact, works with the stories that people make consciously, stories that are based on the deep stories that people have unconsciously in their minds. In this process, people actually make stories that the support their perceptions and concepts, and avoid the stories that do not support their experiences and destroy their perceptions or identities. (Bell, 2002).

The participants of this study were 20 female executives who had experienced management positions at Tehran's higher education centers (over the past 10 years), who were selected through targeted sampling. The purpose of using a targeted sampling method is that the participants in the research should be well-versed in the subject matter studied. Data collection in this study was conducted using in-depth interviews. Female managers volunteered for the plan with the desired characteristics, participated in two interviews through a conversation, which lasted roughly from 6 to 8 weeks. The interview was written from the first meeting and were referred to the participants for review, and the next meeting was held 6 to 8 weeks later. At the time of the interview, participants were asked to review the text of the interview and reflect the conflicting issues or situations with which they were or are still facing the manager, in particular the conflicting situations that are relevant to their developmental values and expectations. Among the major issues related to the qualitative researches and tools used in it, are the issues related to validity and reliability that are taken from the paradigm of quantitative researches and have another meaning in the qualitative researches and are examined in the validity of research with four components of trustworthiness, reliability, confidentiality and transferability (Patti et al., 2012).

To this end, the results of the research and the story from the narratives of female managers were returned to a number of them to determine if they could communicate with this collection and whether they have experienced the findings in their management life and have a positive opinion about it. In addition to these two solutions, the researcher continually communicates with the research theme and the obtained data and the continuous re-thinking of the findings and the classes in the research provides an environment for the research path to be found in a dynamic and coherent whole that is capable of continuous recovery and improvement. In narrative studies, the data analysis step is not a separated and step-by-step process, but a process that is ongoing. On the other hand, methods of analysis of narratives are very different based on the purpose of the research, the research theme, the type of story, the type of research and the participants (Ghorbani et al., 2017).

In this research, thematic analysis method was used for data analysis. One of the most suitable analytical techniques in qualitative research is thematic analysis that is widely used (Abedi et al., 2011). Thematic analysis is a method for recognizing, analyzing and reporting patterns in qualitative data. This method is a process for analyzing textual data and transforms distributed and diverse data into rich and detailed data. The theme represents important information about the research data and questions, and to a certain extent, indicates the meaning and concept of an existing pattern in a set of data (Clarke and Brown, 2006). The four

main steps in analyzing the data of this research are the following: 1- coding 2- classification and naming of the topics 3- description or narration of the themes 4- drawing of the content network.

#### 4. Finding

The present study attempts to reveal the developmental experiences of women in management positions at higher education centers. In this research, narrative research method was used to hear the experiences and stories of women from the paths that took place. The data analysis method was also used to analyze the data and the steps are as follows:

**Coding Stage:** At this stage, the audio file of the interviews was done in the form of text and writing and their transcription was done accurately, and then the text of the interviews was repeatedly recited to provide full familiarity with the text. After recognizing the texts, the process of coding began. With reading the text and comparing it with different sections of the interview, it was tried to identify meaningful propositions, that is, parts that contain relevant information related to the research. Subsequently, each of these meaningful propositions was allocated to the code.

**Categorizing and Naming the Themes:** In the process of coding, first, the basic themes that represent an important point in the text were identified, then the themes that had the most similarity and could semantically make a single meaning were in the same category and the factors contributing to the development of women in five categories of themes including education and development, family, individual characteristics, attitudes of employees and authorities, community attitudes and the factors preventing women's development in the seven categories of themes including education and development, family, individual characteristics, discrimination, attitudes of employees and authorities, community attitudes and cultural stereotypes were created which was assigned to these classes, the term "organizing theme". Subsequently, the organizing themes were also studied and compared, and the themes that most closely resembled and communicated in one class and three categories of individual, organizational and cultural-social themes were created for the factors contributing to and inhibiting the development of women, which were called "comprehensive themes".

**The first comprehensive theme: Individual:** Individual theme includes organizing themes of the development and education, family, individual characteristics. **Development and Education:** In the theme of development and education, research participants have narrated that: Participant 1 says that 10 years ago, was new chapter in my work life. Due to the cultural conditions and family views, girls in the country are always trained so that working at home is a priority for them and this is a fear and anxiety always in their minds and hearts, which may lose their family strength if they pay too much attention to employment. Participant number 2 says that women may do much more intrinsically repetitive and routine work, but everything would be better done with practice. It took me a lot of time and attempts to be smart. Participant number 3 says that it seems to me that studying always opens up new doors to people, but if it is a lady that will be doubled. Participant number 4 says that one challenge is that women themselves do not really need power, and I think the educational issues before entering the workplace is the main factor. In the early days, I was quite isolated, and perhaps I did not have enough audacity to attend the collective discussions and as the director. Participant number 11 says that since the last 15 years of studying in dentistry, I did not always know the treatment as my only goal. During her studies, Mrs. Masters always created attitudes in which there is an infinite talent for women, and if this talent is applied, it can be transformative from an individual and a social point of view. Since I was a faculty member (assistant professor), I tried to get started the management. So I took a lot of short courses in one of the private centers. The intellectual orientation and enhancement of the power of analysis was another feature of these courses. I think these trainings have played a very important part in my

development. Participant number 12 says that In my family, I would certainly have been able to achieve my goals as much as my brothers supported.

In this research in the field of development and education, participants recognize the leading factors for the development of women in management career, the training of brave, courageous, authoritarian and social girls. From their point of view, the lack of ethical, behavioral, and educational training for boys and girls to acquire management skills is one of the factors hindering the development of women in management careers and considered one of the strategies for mental development in management training classes for women.

**Individual Characteristics:** In the theme of individual characteristics, research participants have narrated that: Participant number 1 says that I had many challenges to accomplish my goals, but I never lost myself. The goal was always important for me, and I knew that I was getting it. My strong point was my self-confidence. I think that one of the main reasons for women's failure in the management careers is the low self-esteem of women and girls in the country. Participant number 3 says that as I said before, I feel like managing to be in my own, as well as looking very much for being updated. During the childhood, the group and the children always looked at me and I was the decision maker. Participant number 5 says that the self-confidence was one of the most important issues that helped me because I always had the view that I had nothing to do. Years ago, I had a good grade at the entrance exam and graduated from the University of Tehran, and this was one of my strong points. I think the level of science can always be advantageous either for women or for men. This is even more important because one of the main factors in reducing self-esteem for women is the low level of knowledge. Participant number 6 says that after 3 years and with the confidence created in me, I could get the head post of the faculty based on the potential that was taught at me, and today, with great efforts, I have a great responsibility in the field of university education. I may have said the point totally, but if I want to introduce some important factors that are the issues of your work, I can point to the lack of hopelessness and the tiredness of failures. Confidence is very important for women. Participant number 8 says that speeches at conferences and seminars caused entering the field of university management. I am very serious at work and I try to understand the law first and last (I saw and learned abroad). If I have succeeded, I think it is due to the adherence to my legal principles and I am known among the staff at the university. Participant number 10 says that I did not think to this issue that as a lady I have more difficult and limited circumstances at the workplace. This feature may be positive for women in college settings, but I do not know in the other fields. Participant number 16 says that the experience of 10 years in the pharmacy and graduate school led me to work as a faculty member at the College of Pharmacy. I think that experience and skill can have a huge impact on the success. Participant number 17 says that after 10 years of working at the university, I've been in charge of the faculty and tried to avoid the harsh and extreme. I always invite the authorities to calm down and avoid the quick decisions. This feature made me even the responsible at the university and created future responsibilities for me. Participant number 19 says that given the good public relations I have always created alternative opportunities for myself, and this is the factor that will drive the path of the university.

In this research, in the theme of individual characteristics of participants, factors contributing to the development of women in management jobs are self-confidence, purposefulness, decision-making, experience and skill, lack of hopelessness and tirelessness, legality, public relations and having peace and patience in decision making. The extreme and low level of knowledge are two factors hindering the development of women in the management occupations.

**Family Features:** In the theme of family features, the research participants have narrated that Participant number 1 says that after some time, given my very good cooperation with my husband and his support, I was able to prove myself and take the chair of the college. However, I spent much more conventional energy and more time spent to prove my abilities. Maybe if a man was in my place, with the assumption of equal function, he was not necessary to spend all this energy and time. If I did not have family support, I would have been left with family responsibilities. Participant number 3 says that my family is very involved in this field. They tried to raise me as a strong girl. Of course, at that time, it was very effective, and today I can understand it

better as a doctor and faculty member. Participant number 9 says that the responsibility for working at home and raising children always kept me back and I could not have a good intellectual focus on important responsibilities. After a long time, it got normal for me to endure the work, and I felt that I owe much responsibility to my current experience. Although I feel my progress has slowed down, I have always tried to do everything good. Participant number 10 says that she has had a successful marriage and my husband has always been with me in working conditions. However, due to family-related issues, the family was given me a very difficult situation, but it made me strong. All my concentration was on my strong points. I had no strength in my work at home, but my wife was supporting me. Participant 17 says that I have been in good condition for the past 10 years. Given that my wife was a psychiatrist, she also provided me with good support and my family, giving me mental condition and mental well-being. This opportunity, as well as my own peace, made me one of the best university professors ever to be selected and approved by university students and officials. Participant number 18 says that the family did not get good support from me, and with my old and outdated thinking in the country as much as possible prevented my progress, but when I was in high school, my father's mind changed. Participant number 20 says that the conflict of work at the clinic, university and home was a big issue for me. In this way, the support of my mother led to a lot of work for my home and child and to work more calmly.

In this research, in the theme of family features, the participants of the factors participating to the development of women in management care include the sponsoring behaviors of the spouse and their participation in the responsibilities of the home and children, as well as the protective behavior of the family and the assistance in the maintenance of children and the importance of the family in training a strong child in the responsibilities of heavy management. From their point of view, the conflict between the occupational and family responsibilities and the age of responsibility for the home and children and the lack of auxiliary forces in dividing these responsibilities are among the rejection of women's development in the management occupations.

The Second Comprehensive Theme: Organizational: Organizational themes include the themes organizing the discrimination, the employees and officials' attitudes.

Discrimination: In the theme of discrimination, research participants have narrated that Participant number 2 says that during my initial career in councils and meetings, it was very disobedient to women's thoughts, but I tried to introduce myself or perhaps women as experts in the field of work with a great deal of study and in this way, the challenge was also overcome. Participant number 4 says that we women acting as deputy head of the department, head of the group or head of the internal office, but when we come to policy and management levels, we are worried about the management of women. They believe that women must go through management levels; of course, I believe that if this is to be done, it is very good, but for both men and women. How can a gentleman get through those levels, but for women this sensibility exists? Participant 5 says that in the organization I was working, most of the staff were male, and that was a hard challenge for women. If a woman entered the organization, it would have little desire to justify her education as well as her education rather the men. However, I worked in that organization for four years and did not abandon the responsibilities with every effort. Participant number 9 says that women are believed to be in an oppressive working environment and have no chance to gain experience. In the past years, it has always been painful for me.

In this research on discrimination, participants consider the factors such as the discrimination in training the skills between women and men, the lack of opportunities for women to prove their abilities and neglect the women's views in decision making sessions in the workplace, against the development of women in management jobs.

The Employees and Officials' Attitude :In the theme of the staff and authorities' attitudes, the research participants have narrated that Participant number 2 says that there is a traditional bias and attitude in the



workplace that women are so slow and they cannot be a manager, but I believe that the precision of women is higher and even their health is more. At first, it was separated the work at my university, and some of them were considered feminine and some were masculine, but now I broke the wrong attitude. It happened to me that the male subordinates and even the women did not want me to manage, but I solved this with great care. Participant number 9 says that my experience shows the fact that women can develop a little bit at university, hardly. It was for myself too. We also have a limited partnership in the workplace, and we are very individualized in the work issues. In this research, in the theme of the employees and officials' attitude, the participants consider the factors such as the lower inclination of women to manage, the women's and men's perspective on having jobs in the organization, the lack of confidence in women's ability to manage and individualize in the workplace, as factors inhibiting the development of women in management occupations and the creation of positive attitudes in each of these areas was considered as a factor for women's development.

Third Comprehensive Theme: Cultural-Social: Cultural-social theme, the themes of organizing the attitude of society, include the cultural stereotypes.

Community Attitude: In the theme of community attitudes, research participants have narrated that Participant number 3 says that, in order to correct misconceptions about women's issues that are not religious and legal, women's management conditions have to be in the framework of the Islamic system and the existing laws. Participant number 7 says that in the country, the conditions of religious attitude create this paradox that women's development is in conflict with values, but I believe this is distortion in religion. This is an unwritten rule in the theme of the governance system of the country. Development for women is much more difficult than men. I understood that exactly 8 years ago. In equal conditions, even in situations where women are far more capable than men, they are always selected for competencies of men. It was not understandable to me, but today I realized that this is an unwritten rule that should be implemented and unfortunately one of the weaknesses of the country.

In this research, in the theme of community attitudes, participants consider the factors such as the wrong attitudes towards women who do not have a religious and legal basis, and prejudicial bias and religious attitudes, and the creation of attitudes based on legal and religious beliefs as hinder the development of women in management jobs.

Cultural Stereotypes: In the theme of cultural stereotypes, research participants have narrated that Participant number 3 says that government support and the elimination of gender thinking can bring all national talent and capabilities into play and contribute to the development of the country. In this period, I was really understood the difficulty of management in real terms. It was as if the pressure was too much. Many were also ready to ruin me. I also tried to go along with the least challenge. The role of cultural issues is also evident in this regard. For me, there were different periods of work. Perhaps, in new generations and with the advent of technology and cyberspace, people's lives are becoming faster, cultural change is faster, and the culture of the people and the lack of gender thinking are diminished. Participant 14 says that in our culture, we always look at women as followers, and they fully regard the management and leadership of each group and team for men. In the past 10 years when I was at one of the ministries, I was present at fewer women's meetings, so that decision-making members determined that women would not be present at the meeting, regardless of responsibility.

In this research, in the theme of cultural stereotypes, participants consider the factors such as lack of government support and the existence of gender thinking and patriarchal perspectives, for hindering the development of women in management jobs.

Themes Network: In the present study, based on the analysis of the narratives of the participants, for the factors contributing to the development of women, three comprehensive themes and five organizing themes, and for women's developmental barriers, three comprehensive themes and seven organizing themes along with their basic themes, were identified. The theme network has been drafted on the basis of the factors

contributing to and preventing the development of women in management positions at higher education centers, as figures 1 and 2.



**Fig. 1.** Themes Network for Factors Promoting Women's Development in Management Posts



Fig. 2. Themes Network of Deterrent Factors for Women's Development in Management Posts

## 5. Discussion

Women have made progress in achieving management positions in higher education centers, but their presence has fallen down in the last decade. Given the fact that many managers retire in the near future, the issue of creating female executives requires the urgent action and the increase in the number of women active in these posts has now become an important issue. Although some researches have focused on increasing the presence of women in management positions, a few of these studies have led to practical action, and few practical measures have led to long-term changes. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the self-concept and formation of women's leadership in senior management posts in higher education centers and the semantic understanding of women's developmental experiences in these posts using narrative-study research method. Narrative research provide a unique way of collecting information necessary to understand the experiences of women working in higher education management posts. The theory of social cognition also has a close relationship with the method of narrative research, which expresses

the effect of the details of the experience and importance of "time, society and place" (Connellly & Clandinin, 2006) cannot be ignored on the formation of individual views and behaviors. The findings of this study, focusing on the gaps in the literature on self-concept and leadership development, address the issue of women's low presence in these posts.

The findings of the research on the topic of growth and education showed that one of the solutions to mental development is to participate in management training sessions for women. These findings are consistent with the results of the research done by Alborzi and Khair (2007), which identified the obstacles to women's empowerment in terms of education in the family and society. Findings of the research on individual characteristics revealed that the factors contributing to the development of women in management careers include the being self-confident, purposefulness, decision-making, experience and skill, lack of hopelessness and tirelessness, legitimacy, relaxation and patience in the decision making and self-concept and the factors preventing women's development are extreme and low level of knowledge. Luke (2007) finds that women's developmental factors are the strong communication networks, high self-confidence, self-control, self-esteem, commitment, conscientiousness and dedication. Therefore, the results of this study are consistent with the results of the research done by Luke (2007). The findings of the research on family characteristics revealed that the factors promoting women's development in management careers are the husband's protective behaviors and his participation in home and children responsibilities as well as family protection and child support and family support in raising a strong child in the management of heavy responsibilities and the factors preventing women's development are the conflict between career and family responsibilities and heavy responsibility of the home and children and lack of auxiliary power to share these responsibilities. These findings are consistent with the results of the research done by Alborzi and Khair (2007), which consider the characteristics of family support, the spouse's support, and the others' support as one of the excellence opportunities for women. Shah Talibi et al. (2009) considered mother's heavy responsibility and wife involvement in their job and housekeeping tasks as barriers to women's development in management jobs, which is consistent with the findings of this research. Research findings on the subject of discrimination showed that the factors hindering women's development in management jobs are the discrimination in the skills training between men and women in the organization, the lack of opportunities for women to prove their abilities, and the neglect of women's attitudes to decision making in the workplace. These findings are consistent with the findings of Eagle and Carly (2007), which identified the scarcity of female staff managers as discriminatory at all levels of the organization between men and women, and also believe that leadership opportunities should be equally divided between men and women, and with assigning full responsibilities, women should be prepared for executive management to gain experience. Findings of the research on the attitudes of employees and authorities showed that the factors hindering the development of women in management occupations are low tendency for subordinates to women's management, women's and men's views on having jobs in the organization, lack of trust in women's ability to manage and individualize in the environment and positive attitudes in each of these fields. These findings are consistent with the results of the research done by Shah Talabi et al. (2009), which identified the barriers to women's development as distrust of the society among women, and Alborzi and Khairi (2008), which considered the suitable culture for changing attitudes towards women, value for women's empowerment, renewal commenting on the rules and gradual assignment of responsibilities as the factors behind the development of women in management jobs. Findings of the research on the content of cultural stereotypes showed that the factors hindering women's development in management jobs are the lack of government support and the existence of gender thinking and patriarchal perspectives. These findings are consistent with the results of the research done by Shah Talabi et al. (2009), which identified the patriarchal roots in the country as the barriers to women's development. For many Iranian women, the role of senior management in higher

education centers is not a choice, but a premise; therefore, it is not surprising that the prominence of management roles among Iranian women is high.

This research identifies the factors contributing to and preventing women's development. The results of this study showed that women's perception of management positions, individual and family characteristics, staff attitudes, community attitudes, cultural stereotypes, and organizational discrimination are some barriers to women's development. The proposed strategies to increase the presence of women in management positions with changing the organizational cultures to a culture of job balance support and explaining the presence of women in management positions, especially in educational and cultural fields, can be useful in the long run in increasing the number of women who have developed in management jobs. In the case of women who have a tendency to develop in management jobs, training and applying them to middle management positions can both increase their experience for high-level positions, and also explore the difference in the management style and capacities between women and men which is very important for explaining the necessity of women in management positions, because without explaining the necessity of women's presence in management positions and the awareness of managers and organizations in this field, the other efforts in this regard will be fruitless. Senior management positions at Higher Education Centers by the results of narrative research can use their effectiveness in achieving the goals of developmental experiences. They can also use the women's developmental experiences to shape the perception of other women in who they are and who they want to become. Employees use this method to learn specific ways of thinking and acting.

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