
PREDICTORS AND OUTCOMES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN EGYPTIAN TRAVEL AGENCIES: PERCEIVED FAIRNESS AS A MEDIATOR

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ABSTRACT

Women in tourism are still concentrated in the lower-status and lower-paid jobs. Yet the integration of women in the labor market is still in process, as gender inequality at the workplace is still found. Therefore, the current paper aims to investigate the predictors and outcomes of women empowerment in Egyptian travel agencies. Furthermore, it examines the mediating effect of perceived fairness in the relationship between women empowerment and employee outcomes. PLS-SEM was employed to analyze the perceptions of 746 females working in some Egyptian travel agencies at different position levels, either as employees, managers, or owners. The findings revealed that organizational culture and organizational support are considered predictors of women empowerment, while performance and organizational citizenship behaviors are identified as outcomes of women empowerment. Moreover, the results showed that perceived fairness plays a partial mediating role in the link between women empowerment, performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. The results hold significant implications for enhancing women's empowerment. Limitations and future research are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: Women empowerment, Organizational culture, Organizational support, Performance, Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), Perceived fairness, Egyptian travel agencies.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women empowerment are the 5th goal of the 17 primary sustainable development goals. The sustainability features of tourism allow it to play a significant role in female empowerment and gender gap reduction (Boley et al., 2017; Rinaldi & Salerno, 2020). The

travel and tourism industry contributes to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 10.4% and generates one of ten jobs all over the world (WTTC, 2019). Indeed, tourism - as a multi-dimensional sector and labor intensive- creates a large number of jobs in various branches of activities like hotels, travel agencies, tour operators, restaurants, leisure activities, and transportation (Rizal & Asokan, 2013).

Tourism offers also a greater opportunity for employing more women than most other industries and thus, it has the potential for empowering women in the tourist industry's government/national and private sectors especially within developing countries (Rizal & Asokan, 2013; Pastore et al., 2020). Therefore, it has been widely recognized as the main tool to reinforce gender equality (UNWTO, 2017; Rinaldi & Salerno, 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2021). Although the important role of tourism in promoting gender equality, women occupy most of unskilled, low level and low-paid tourism-related jobs (Ramchurjee, 2011; Alrwaifiah et al., 2020; Gebbels et al., 2020; Pastore et al., 2020). This might be because of different reasons such as cultural, traditions and religious, norms (Mrema, 2015; Al-Ismail et al., 2019; WTTC, 2019).

Based on Al-Ismail et al. (2019), the Middle East group of countries (Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Kuwait, Turkey) having a family-oriented social culture with an unequal allocation of duties in which gender injustice is the norm, the dominant concept is that women generally derive their status from marriage and maternity and there is anxiety that household responsibilities may be jeopardized in the pursuit of a job. Particularly in Egypt, the female employment rate in travel and tourism employment lags far behind their participation in the general economy because they occupy less than 10% of employment in this sector (WTTC, 2019).

Organizational culture (Carvalho et al., 2018; Carvalho et al., 2019), and organizational support (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Russen et al., 2021a) can enhance women's representation within organizations and play a significant role in addressing gender inequality in the tourism sector. According to Segovia-Pérez et al. (2018) firms with a masculine culture, women are less likely to feel that their companies are supportive of female selection and advancement. Moreover, Kurtessis et al. (2017) added that companies with the higher perceived level of organizational support, have greater gender diversity among their management members. Furthermore, empowering women and gender diversity at the workplace improve all organizations' operations (e.g. work environment, leadership, and innovation) (WTTC, 2019), which consequently lead to better performance (Hsiao et al., 2015; Song et al., 2020) and motivate employees to do extra-role behaviors that defined as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Testa, 2009; Hsiao et al., 2015).

Despite the tourism gender research has been growing steadily since the mid-2000s, gender was poorly reflected in the tourism writings and required more discussion (Mohanty et al., 2018; Gebbels et al., 2020). In addition, WTTC (2019) mentioned that gender inequity in the labor market is widely noticed in the majority of emerging economies, especially in the Arab countries, Southern Asia and North Africa. However, specific factors (organizational culture and support), that may affect women's empowerment in the Egyptian tourism context have not been specifically tested. Therefore, to bridge the existing gaps in the current literature, - to the best of our knowledge- this study is the first trial to examine the organizational culture and organizational support as predictors of women's empowerment in Egyptian travel agencies. Moreover, it measures the effect of women's empowerment on employee outcomes (performance and organizational citizenship behavior). Furthermore, until now, most studies seem to focus on the direct relationship between women's empowerment and employee outcomes (e.g., Hsiao et al., 2015; Song et al., 2020). This paper takes a different approach by modeling perceived fairness as a mediating factor. Besides, this paper responds to the call of Russen et al. (2021a) to explore the mediating impact of perceived fairness in the link between women empowerment and employee outcomes. The results of Russen et al. (2021a) have assumed that perceived fairness is regarded as a major mediator and protective element in gender diversity studies. The research of Li et al. (2020) also revealed that when employees are treated fairly this will positively affect their attitude and actions toward their company. Employees tend to perform better if they are treated fairly (Krishnan et al., 2018) and become more likely to show OCB in the workplace (Singh & Singh, 2019). Consequently, perceived fairness is anticipated to be one of the vital mediating factors influencing the relationship between women's empowerment and employees' outcomes.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Tourism has an important effect on the worldwide economy, society, environment, and other sustainable elements. Women empowerment refers to a society in which males and females have the same chances, outcomes, rights, and duties in all fields of life (Mrema, 2015). Tourism as a labor-intensive sector and the main employment generator can provide a high percentage of work chances for skilled and semi-skilled employees, especially for poor, women, and youth, and consequently tourism can play a substantial role in poverty alleviation (Ramchurjee, 2011; Rizal & Asokan, 2013).

Likewise, the study of Chok et al. (2007) asserted that tourism can reduce poverty and support women's empowerment. Ramchurjee (2011) described

tourism as a vehicle for women's empowerment and gender equality. Mohanty et al. (2018) indicated that tourism-related jobs are generally based on human interactions and consequently as women are recognized to be good at interpersonal skills, women are prospecting to perform better in the tourism tasks assigned to them. Moreover, tourism in most countries of the world takes place as a part-time activity, so it became suitable for women to do tourism-related tasks during their spare time after completing their housework. Accordingly, tourism undoubtedly becomes a tool to reduce the gender gap and promote gender equality (UNWTO, 2019; Rinaldi & Salerno, 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2021).

Although the important role of tourism in promoting gender equality, women occupy most of unskilled, low level and low-paid tourism-related jobs (Ramchurjee, 2011; Alrwajfah et al., 2020; Gebbels et al., 2020; Pastore et al., 2020). Likewise, the Global Report of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) stated that "women in tourism are still underpaid, under-utilized, undereducated and under-represented" (UNWTO, 2019, p. ii).

Similarly, Al-Ismail et al. (2019) and Nagar (2021) pointed out that the nature of jobs in the tourism industry is often gendered, with males prevalent in senior positions, which in turn, enhances the low status and amplifies the low position in society. While women represent more than 50% of the workforce, however, they gain 14.7% less than males and occupy less than a fifth of leadership positions in the tourism industry (UNWTO, 2019). Yet women are still generally misrepresented in senior management positions and being in leadership roles is the exception, not the rule (Gebbels et al., 2020; Nagar, 2021). Therefore, the integration of women in the labor market is still in process, as gender inequality at the workplace is still found (BoyoIngan & Litwin, 2019).

When searching gender and tourism in developing countries, there is a lack of women empowerment due to several factors (Al-Ismail et al., 2019; WTTC, 2019). Social norms for third world women still predominate in identifying the type of work that women occupy (Mrema, 2015). For women, tourism is considered a relatively feminine industry, however, conventional conservative culture restricts the function of tourism in women empowerment (Zhang & Zhang, 2021). For example, Masadeh et al. (2018) reported that in Islamic countries, women are extremely concerned with the employment opportunities that tourism supply, however, religious beliefs and social norms negatively affected their tourism empowerment. Similarly, Alsawafi (2016) proved that despite the positive perceptions of female students towards women empowerment in Oman's tourism sectors, traditional community customs and traditions still hinder female students from selecting to work in tourism after graduation.

Family restrictions also constitute a primary challenge for empowering women in tourism (Alrwajfah et al., 2020). Abou-Shouk et al. (2021) demonstrated that there is a popular false belief in the Arab and Islamic countries that employment in the tourism sector goes against religious values and leads to an individual's moral failure. This belief prohibits youth, particularly women in those communities, from engaging in tourism work. This idea resulted from the work environment which is characterized by mingling, too much enjoyment, and alcohol consumption especially in the hospitality sector compared to other tourism sectors like travel agencies, airlines, and government (Tan et al., 2016). As a result the ratio of women employment in Arab countries is still low (Al-Ismail et al., 2019). In the same context, racial stereotypes of women remain prevalent in developing countries where women are believed to be unsuitable for many jobs (Mohanty et al., 2018). Studies have also revealed that the decisions of women's employment are usually linked to family considerations e.g. marital status and children's ages (Nagar, 2021). Motherhood drives women to isolate themselves in less innovative and less skilled jobs, and thus they are paid less (Pastore et al., 2020). It is difficult for women to achieve a balance between their household responsibilities and working hours (Rosa et al., 2015; Alrwajfah et al., 2020). For example, research by Al-Ismail et al. (2019), on female employment in Saudi Arabia and UAE hotels, mentioned that females with childcare or other family responsibilities experienced increased difficulty in balancing between work and life, which, in turn, negatively affected their job satisfaction. Moreover, pay gaps are a common challenge for empowering women in tourism, women are paid less than men even with the same job characteristics or same task performed (Guimaraes & Silva, 2016; Mohanty et al., 2018; Zhang & Zhang, 2021).

Differently, some researchers think that gender inequality in tourism is not because of gender discrimination, but human resources themselves, specifically the inability of women to work efficiently (Litwin et al., 2019). Carvalho et al. (2019) and Costa et al. (2019) reported that females are still considered less suitable for senior positions in tourism industry, because of the educational and training gap between women and men and the shortage of female skilled laborers (Alrwajfah et al., 2020). In the study of Costa et al. (2019) for identifying the ideal type of tourism employee and manager, they discovered that females may be barred from various managerial roles owing to the difficulties of being flexible in specific jobs in terms of working hours. They added that "Tourism is notorious for having very long work hours, at unsocial times and days (e.g. the weekend).

Besides, shift work is very common, mainly because tourist services are available 24hr a day, seven days a week" (Costa et al., 2019, p. 64). As a result, flexibility is deemed a substantial asset in the tourism sector.

Therefore, employers favor males over females in managerial positions. This, in turn, leads to that women's works in tourism are still being characterized by low-skilled and low-level status with fewer chances for promotion than males (Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015). Finally, Mrema (2015) has identified sexual exploitation as a major challenge to women's empowerment in the tourism sector.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture refers to assumptions, conducts, and perceptions that direct decisions and behavior in institutions (Longman et al., 2018). The nature of company culture is a major cause of women's absence from leadership positions (Segovia-Pérez et al., 2018). Numerous studies (e.g. Bajdo & Dickson 2001; Carvalho et al., 2018; Longman et al., 2018) have assumed that organizational cultures tend to be gendered or “male-oriented”, which means that assumptions about leaders and contributors to efficient management are usually normative for males.

In the same context, the existence of an embedded male organizational culture in several organizations constituted obstacles to females in hospitality and tourism organizations (Remington & Kitterlin-Lynch, 2018; Segovia-Pérez et al., 2018; Carvalho et al., 2019). Yet, the senior positions are still male dominant, hence organizational culture can enhance women's representation within organizations (Carvalho et al., 2018; Carvalho et al., 2019).

Sharma (2016) identified diversity-supportive organizational culture as a strategy that promotes women's empowerment in top managerial positions. While WTTC (2019) reported corporate culture as a major driver for women's equality in the workplace. Similarly, Acker (2012) determines organizational culture as a creator of gender inequalities in organizations. Moreover, the interviews in the study of Carvalho et al. (2018) proved the importance of organizational culture in achieving gender equality in tourism.

Likewise, Carvalho et al. (2019) informed some aspects related to organizational culture as determinants of women empowerment in the tourism sector (i.e. respect for employees' rights during pregnancy, discrimination inexistence, informal flexibility, the presence of career advancement opportunities, and a ‘good environment’. According to Segovia-Pérez et al. (2018), the interviewed female executives confirmed that organizational culture was one of the main limiting determinants for the women's career.

In the same context, Bajdo and Dickson (2001) statistically proved that the organizational culture was significantly correlated with the percentage of women's advancement in organizations. They also found that the

organizational culture practices that emphasized gender equity were the most influential predictor of the proportion of women in management. Finally, based on the research results of Babalola et al. (2021), the organizational culture enhanced African women's leadership. Therefore, based on the previous arguments the following hypothesis could be formulated:

H1: The Organizational culture is a predictor of women's empowerment in Egyptian travel agencies.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Organizational support refers to the perceptions of employees that the company appreciated their contribution and welfare (Saltson & Özgür, 2015), which can be seen as encouraging them in their career advancement or moving into senior positions, and assisting them to keep moving upwards if they want (Russen et al., 2021a). Saltson and Özgür (2015) illustrated that when employees view organizations as supportive of labor force diversity, they tend to view the firm as caring.

Research by Segovia-Pérez et al. (2018) confirmed that in organizations with a masculine culture, women are less probably to sense that their companies are supportive of female selection, advancement, or mentoring. Companies with the higher perceived level of organizational support, have greater gender diversity among their management members (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Russen et al. (2021a) indicated that organizational support plays a significant role in addressing gender inequality in the tourism sector. They indicated that females in tourism who experience organizational support are more likely to do well in management, even if it has a masculine culture. Accordingly, organizational support is a main method for enhancing gender diversity, consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The Organizational support is a predictor of women's empowerment in Egyptian travel agencies.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES (PERFORMANCE AND OCB)

Empirical results on the connection between gender diversity and firm performance are different and often contradictory. Some previous studies reported that these variables were not statistically correlated (Carter et al., 2010; Marinova et al., 2016). While, other researchers have shown that gender diversity was negatively correlated with firm performance (Adams & Ferreira, 2009; Pastore et al., 2020). This view of the point was based on the liberal feminist theory which demonstrated that females underperform

relative to males as they are disadvantaged— compared to men—because of discrimination (Menicucci et al., 2019).

Moreover, this negative correlation may also be due to the usage of inappropriate performance measures (e.g., assets, firm size, and income) (Menicucci et al., 2019). Contrastingly, some papers have revealed that female involvement in top management teams is positively associated with firm performance (Hsiao et al., 2015; Song et al., 2020). Women have better interpersonal skills than men (Pastore et al., 2020), and are more likely to be efficient at promoting harmony (Song et al., 2020). Furthermore, the presence of gender diversity in senior positions gives a broad range of related knowledge, skills, competencies, and other attributes of individuals, which results in better performance (Menicucci et al., 2019; Song et al., 2020).

Additionally, having women in management positions improves the firm's performance in all fields of operations including work environment and values, leadership, innovation, accountability, and external orientation (WTTC, 2019). According to Song et al. (2020), gender diversity positively affected firm performance in the lodging industry. Likewise, the study of Hsiao et al. (2015) confirmed that the level of diversity realized by hotel employees, positively impacted employee performance.

In addition to anticipated job performance, gender diversity may also help to reinforce extra-role behaviors which are generally defined as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB refers to “Unrecognized individual behavior both implicitly and explicitly through a formal reward system that supports the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization as a whole” (Marfuatun & Muafi, 2021, p.17). Based on the previous description, OCB was treated as extra-role performance (Marfuatun & Muafi, 2021). The results of Hsiao et al. (2015) showed that organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of hotel employees was positively affected by the level of perceived gender diversity. In gender-diverse hotels, employees are more productive and likely to do extra roles outside their job descriptions (Hsiao et al., 2015). Likewise, the findings of Testa (2009) proved that the level of diversity in hospitality organizations positively impacted OCB. Furthermore, the research of Mamman et al (2012) proved that workforce diversity was correlated with OCB. Hence, based on the previous debates the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3: Women empowerment positively enhances performance in Egyptian travel agencies.

H4: Women empowerment positively enhances OCB in Egyptian travel agencies.

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED FAIRNESS

Organizational justice is described as the employees' perception of how they are treated fairly within their organizations (Gan & Yusof, 2018; Farid et al., 2019), and how this fair treatment is correlated with employees' attitudes and actions toward their company (Li et al., 2020). Organizational justice has main four dimensions namely procedural justice, distributive justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice (Gan & Yusof, 2018). Procedural and distributive justice are the main dimensions of organizational justice, and the majority of previous empirical studies have referred to these two variables as perceived fairness (Farid et al., 2019).

On one hand, employees who were hired and promoted through a system they think to be unfair may face a sense of inequity (Yerkes et al., 2017). If females are provided opportunities at least as much as their male peers, the company will have a stronger culture via perceived fairness and justice (Russen et al., 2021b). Minimum gender diversity in senior management positions reflects the organizational justice related to the way of women treated in the organization (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). Organizations are considered fair when their decisions, actions, and interpersonal handlings are equal across every category (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Madera et al., 2019). This fairness will encourage women to apply for vacant jobs, hence enhancing women's empowerment and generating a diversified workforce (Madera et al., 2019; Russen et al., 2021a).

The study of Russen et al. (2021b) proved that the gender of an employee who was promoted positively influenced perceived fairness, both distributive and procedural fairness, in addition, both of them decrease gender discrimination against women when promoting a female employee. The results of Choi and Rainey (2014) indicated employees who realized higher levels of organizational fairness, and their organizations effectively managed diversity, became very satisfied with their works. Moreover, the same study revealed that women are more likely to show higher levels of job satisfaction than men when they see that their organizations manage diversity well, and have fair and equitable procedures (Choi & Rainey, 2014). Madera et al. (2019) added that females were more attracted than males to firms with higher levels of women empowerment in senior positions. Accordingly, perceived fairness and women empowerment were positively correlated and fairness plays an important role in reinforcing women empowerment (Russen et al., 2021a).

On the other hand, employee performance is a significant aspect of the organization because this will determine the progress or drop of the company (Pakpahan et al., 2020). As mentioned by Krishnan et al. (2018) employees tend to do their tasks better when they have been treated fairly.

Previous studies had shown that perceptions of fairness are a predictor of organizational outcomes which include work performance. For example, a study by Suliman and Al Kathairi (2013) reported that organizational justice (procedural, interactional) and job performance were positively correlated.

Likewise, the results of Krishnan et al. (2018) argued that the three dimensions of organizational justice (procedural, distributive, and interactional) positively influenced employee's job performance. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2010) proved that organizational justice and work performance were positively correlated via leader-member exchange and commitment. The research of Pakpahan et al. (2020) illustrated that organizational justice was seen as an approach to reinforce employee performance. The same study reported that distributive and interactional justice significantly affected employee performance (Pakpahan et al., 2020). Recently, Russen et al. (2021b) pointed out that the hotel staff's perception of fairness in the promotional process will directly impact their productivity.

Moreover, the extant literature has assumed that when employees feel fair treatment they become more likely to show OCB in the workplace, on the contrary, if they encounter inequity at the workplace, they will not offer extra job behaviors or limit their effort to fulfill only the contractual duties (Singh & Singh, 2019). Therefore, several researches revealed that perceived fairness positively and significantly influenced employees' OCB. For example, the findings of Messer and White (2006) revealed that employees' perceptions of fairness impacted their probability to conduct organizational citizenship behaviors. Similarly, the empirical findings of Shahzad et al. (2014) showed a significant positive association between organizational justice and OCB. Moreover, Nadiri and Tanova (2010) statistically proved that distributive justice perception influenced OCB of hotel employees more than procedural justice. While Yadav and Gupta (2017) reported that procedural justice is an influential antecedent of OCB in the Indian tourism industry. Therefore, based on previous discussion perceived fairness is a hypothesized mediator between women empowerment and employment outcomes. Hence, four hypotheses were proposed in this regard:

H5: Women empowerment correlates positively with perceived fairness in Egyptian travel agencies.

H6: Perceived fairness positively enhances performance in Egyptian travel agencies.

H7: Perceived fairness positively enhances OCB in Egyptian travel agencies.

H8: Perceived fairness mediates the relationship between women empowerment and performance.

H9: Perceived fairness mediates the relationship between women empowerment and OCB.

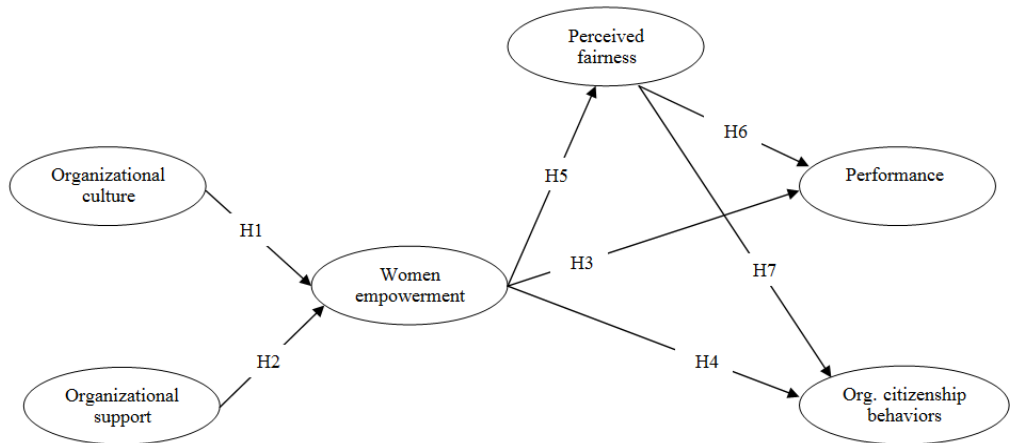


Figure (1) The research proposed model

METHOD

MEASURES

The study is based on a quantitative methodology. To collect the required data from women who worked in Egyptian travel agencies, a well-structured questionnaire was designed. This questionnaire includes six sections: women empowerment (WE), organizational culture (OC), organizational support (OS), perceived fairness (PF), performance (PR), and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). As theoretical measures already exist, the constructs in the study were assessed using pre-existing scales from the literature. The used scale for measuring women empowerment was adapted from that developed by Qahtani et al. (2021). This scale includes 15 items. While organizational culture was measured by 10 items derived from Johnson and McIntye (1998). Eisenberger et al. (1986) provided 8 items to measure organizational support. 11 items adapted from Niehoff and Moorman (1993) were used to measure perceived fairness. Conger et al. (2000) devised 5 items to measure performance. Finally, 19 items modified from Organ and Konovsky (1989) were used to assess organizational citizenship behaviors.

All items were assessed on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Because of its ease of design, administration, and comprehension by responders, a seven-point scale was employed (Malhotra & Dash, 2019). Furthermore, it provides sufficient response variance, significant measurement precision, and better power to discover response changes as Hair et al. (2019) stated.

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

The data was gathered in Egypt. Participants were Egyptian women who work in Egyptian travel agencies – category A – in Cairo. First, researchers acquired permission from the human resources department of these agencies. The paper-based surveys were then sent to those women who volunteered to participate. At the start of the survey, these participants accessed a permission page that stated their anonymity and the study's goal as research only. Finally, participants were asked to complete the form during non-working hours and return it in a sealed envelope. On-site, researchers collected all completed surveys. Data were collected during the period from February 2021 to May 2021.

Out of 1500 women reached, 993 consented to complete the survey, resulting in a 66.2 percent response rate. After removing missing values and unengaged replies from the data, the final sample size was 746, which was used for further analysis. The sample size obtained was adequate to apply structural equation modelling (SEM) as the multivariate analysis approach, with an item-to-response ratio of 1:10, as recommended by Hair et al (2010).

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and partial least squares structural equation modelling were employed in this study to test the structural model. The two-step technique of Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was used to test the research model. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and CFA were used to test the individual measurement model. The EFA with varimax rotation was used as the initial step to clarify the discovered components and identify the major constructions in the data (Field, 2013). CFA was used to evaluate the suggested relationship between the observed items and the latent variables, which was also used to assess the measuring scales' goodness of fit and psychometric properties. CFA improves the findings of traditional techniques (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) by verifying a scale's unidimensionality, and to ensure unidimensionality, the factorial structure revealed in the exploratory study is being refined.

Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated for the latent constructs. According to Hair et al. (2006), the CR coefficients and AVE values should be larger than 0.7 and greater than 0.5, respectively. Cronbach's alpha values were calculated as well, which should be larger than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). The content, convergent, and discriminant validity of the measure were examined. When the scale is built according to Hair et al. (2021), the content validity is presumed to be correct. When the t-value linked with each factor loading is significant, convergent validity is accepted. Discriminant validity was proven when the

AVE value for each variable was higher than the squared correlation coefficients for the linked inter-construct correlations (Kline, 2015).

Finally, given all of the data, a structural equation model was run to examine the links between the constructs. This study contained six constructs in an integrated model, with the intention of examining the correlations between multiple constructs at the same time with the least amount of error in the model, that is why SEM was chosen for this study (Malhotra & Dash, 2019). Hair et al. (2010) revealed that SEM is a favored analysis technique when multiple associations between various unobservable latent constructs must be explored concurrently with high statistical precision.

Malhotra and Dash (2019) added that SEM clearly accounts for measurement errors in the model, which boosts the model's explanatory power. SEM, like other multivariate techniques such as multiple regression, does not divide data variances and instead evaluates covariance. Moreover, Hair et al. (2010) indicated that SEM is a confirmatory technique rather than an exploratory one; it operates on the premise of data normality; it requires big datasets, and it is an extension of multiple regression and factor analysis.

RESULTS

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Of the 746 respondents, 54% were between 30-40 years old and two-thirds of the sample (77.1%) had a bachelor's degree, which illustrates that majority of respondents were highly educated. As well, the majority of respondents (85.1%) were employees. About 51.7% of the respondents had 5 - 15 years of work experience in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Table (1) demographic profile of respondents (n= 746)

Age	Under 30 years	30-40 years	41-50 years	More than 50 year		
	10.9%	54%	23.3%	11.8%		
Education	Bachelor	Diploma	Master	PhD	Others	
	77.1%	9.7%	4.3%	1.7%	7.2%	
Position	Owner	Manager	Deputy manager	Supervisor	Team leader	Employee
	1.3%	1.5%	4.3%	3.6%	5.5%	83.8%
Job experience	Under 5 years	5-10	11-15	16-20	More than 20	
	19.2%	25.2%	26.5%	21.6%	7.5%	

MEASUREMENT MODEL

Table 2 presented that loadings of all items in the final measurement model met the minimal cut-off value of 0.40 (Hair et al., 2021), indicating that

internal consistency was attained. Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.70, Nunnally's minimal dependability threshold (1978). All CR values were larger than the minimal cut-off point of 0.70 in terms of convergent validity, and all AVE values were greater than the 0.50 cut-off point (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, Bagozzi, 1981). As a result, the measurement model was determined to be adequate regarding reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Table (2) results of measurement model

Construct	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE
WE		.81		
AK		.89	.84	.77
AK1	.82			
AK2	.77			
AK3	.63			
AS		.78	.82	.61
AS1	.79			
AS2	.86			
OT		.83	.79	.55
OT1	.65			
OT2	.84			
OT3	.75			
OT4	.79			
OT5	.89			
AP		.81	.77	.70
AP1	.68			
AP2	.83			
PW		.93	.88	.71
PW1	.69			
PW2	.87			
PW3	.77			
OC		.79	.82	.59
OC1	.68			
OC2	.75			
OC3	.65			
OC4	.85			
OC5	.82			
OC6	.83			
OC7	.83			
OC8	.72			
OC9	.87			
OC10	.76			
OS		.83	.75	.63
OS1	.72			
OS2	.84			

OS3	.76			
OS4	.65			
OS5	.80			
OS6	.81			
OS7	.64			
OS8	.68			
PF		.94	.80	.71
PF1	.76			
PF2	.73			
PF3	.69			
PF4	.63			
PF5	.83			
PF6	.75			
PF7	.64			
PF8	.82			
PF9	.72			
FP10	.88			
PF11	.74			
EP		.88	.83	.60
EP1	.85			
EP2	.75			
EP3	.71			
EP4	.81			
EP5	.66			
OCB		.78	.76	.54
OCB1	.66			
OCB2	.76			
OCB3	.75			
OCB4	.66			
OCB5	.69			
OCB6	.63			
OCB7	.76			
OCB8	.80			
OCB9	.71			
OCB10	.79			
OCB11	.79			
OCB12	.81			
OCB13	.77			
OCB14	.83			
OCB15	.81			
OCB16	.84			
OCB17	.79			
OCB18	.88			
OCB19	.83			

After verifying the fit and validity of each measurement model, the full measurement model was validated. The overall measurement model was tested using the complete sample (N = 746). The goodness of fit indices ($\chi^2 = 3,412.22$, $df = 997$, $\chi^2/df = 3.42$, CFI = 0.92, GFI = 0.90, NFI = .911, CFI = .932, TLI = .910, RMSEA = 0.05) all suggested that the model and data were fairly good fit. The reliability of each construct varied from .78 to .94, as seen in Table 2, with all values exceeding .70. All factor loadings ranged from .63 to 0.89 and were statistically significant (i.e. all greater than .50). Each construct's AVE value exceeded .50 and was frequently higher than the squared correlation. As a result, convergent validity and discriminant validity were both sufficient.

Table (3) the correlations among constructs (Discriminant validity), mean and standard deviation

Construct	WE	OC	OS	PF	PR	OCB
WE	(.877)					
OC	.497	(.768)				
OS	.621	.623	(.794)			
PF	.603	.537	.587	(.843)		
PR	.596	.597	.531	.711	(.775)	
OCB	.667	.523	.603	.587	.567	(.735)
Mean	4.57	5.16	4.73	4.81	5.49	5.66
SD	.92	.76	.66	.90	.74	.81

STRUCTURAL MODEL

To test all of the hypotheses, a structural model was estimated. The goodness of fit statistics revealed that the model fit the present data fairly well. The hypothesized model's RMSEA score was .05, indicating a high level of precision (MacCallum et al., 1996). Figure 2 depicts the completed structural model with direct path values. As indicated in Table 4, the path coefficient values and significance level demonstrated that the structural paths were both positive and significant, implying that all direct positive links were supported. Results showed that OC had a significant impact on WE ($\beta = 0.41$ and $P < 0.01$). In addition, OS had a significant impact on WE ($\beta = 0.74$ and $P < 0.01$). Hence, H1 and H2 are supported. While WE had a significant impact on PR ($\beta = 0.66$ and $P < 0.01$), OCB ($\beta = 0.71$ and $P < 0.01$) and PF ($\beta = 0.39$ and $P < 0.01$). Thus, H3, H4, and H5 are supported. Finally it was found PF had a significant impact on both PR ($\beta = 0.63$ and $P < 0.01$) and OCB ($\beta = 0.50$ and $P < 0.01$). Therefore, H6 and H7 are supported. From figure (2), it can be concluded that WE is explained 38% by OC and OS. As well, WE explains 16% of PF. WE and PF explain 34% of EP and 21% of OCB.

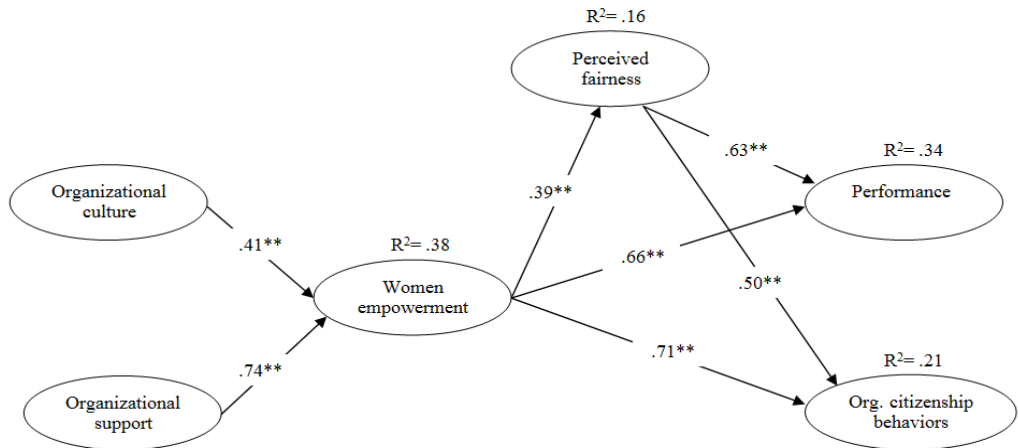


Figure (2) Final structural model with direct path results

Table (4) path coefficient and t-value of structural model (test of hypothesis)

Hypothesis/path	Coefficient	t-value	result
H1: OC → WE	.41	6.921**	Supported
H2: OS → WE	.74	9.824**	Supported
H3: WE → PR	.66	8.741**	Supported
H4: WE → OCB	.71	8.931**	Supported
H5: WE → PF	.39	4.521**	Supported
H6: PF → PR	.63	6.224**	Supported
H7: PF → OCB	.50	7.245**	Supported

To investigate the intervening role of PF in the relationship between WE and PR and OCB, The bootstrapping algorithm was employed (Taylor et al., 2008). There are two types of mediation. First, the mediating effect is complete when the association among the independent and dependent constructs becomes non-significant when the mediating construct is included. Second, the mediating effect is partial if the association among the independent and dependent constructs remains significant after inserting the mediating construct (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Table (5) depicted that the findings of the mediating role of PF supported the hypotheses (8 and 9). The indirect impact coefficients were all positive and significant ($p < 0.01$), and PF plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between WE and PR and OCB, supporting H8 and H9.

Table (5) direct and indirect effect

Hypothesis/path	Estimates	Bootstrapping 5,000 times				p
		Bias-corrected		Percentile		
		95% CI		95% CI		
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	
WE→ PF → PR	.37	.05	.26	.05	.22	**
WE→ PF → OCB	.51	.08	.44	.08	.41	**
WE→ PR	.66	.03	.26	.03	.25	**
WE→ OCB	.71	.11	0.63	.11	.62	**

DISCUSSIONS

All hypotheses are explicitly supported by research findings. This study proposed a conceptual framework for uncovering women empowerment in the tourism industry by examining the impact of two predictors of women empowerment (organizational culture and organizational support), as well as investigating the effect of women empowerment on performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. It also explored the extent to which perceived fairness mediates the links between women's empowerment and performance and organizational citizenship behaviors.

First, it was discovered that OC had a significant impact on WE. A one-point increase in OC results in a 41% point increase in WE. This finding suggested that organizational culture is critical for women's empowerment in the tourism sector, not just because it is a key driver of workplace equality for women (WTTC, 2019), but also because it improves women's participation within organizations and plays an important role in reducing gender inequality in the tourism industry (Carvalho et al., 2019). This result is in line with some of the previous studies. According to Sharma (2016), organizational culture can increase women's empowerment in top management positions. Moreover, Carvalho et al. (2018) demonstrated the significance of organizational culture in attaining gender equality in the tourism industry. Additionally, Bajdo and Dickson (2001) indicated that the most significant predictor of the number of women in management is organizational culture practices that promote gender equity.

Second, the OS had a significant impact on WE. A one-point increase in OS results in a 74% point increase in WE. This finding depicted that, organizational support is critical for increasing women's participation inside organizations and has a key role in reducing gender inequality in the tourism sector (Russen et al., 2021a). This finding is similar to the findings of Kurtessis et al. (2017), who found that firms with a higher perceived degree of organizational support have more gender diversity among their managerial staff. According to Russen et al. (2021a), organizational support is important in reducing gender inequality in the tourism industry. While this finding contrasts with that of Segovia-P'erez et al. (2018), who

found that in firms with a macho culture, women are less likely to believe that their employers encourage female selection, promotion, or mentorship. Third, WE had a significant impact on PR. A one-point rise in WE results in a 66% point gain in PR. This finding indicated that women's empowerment plays a key role in improving performance because the existence of female representation in senior positions provides a broad range of related knowledge, skills, capabilities, and other qualities of individuals, high performance (Menicucci et al., 2019; Song et al., 2020). This finding is similar to the findings of Hsiao et al. (2015) and Song et al. (2020), who discovered a positive association between female participation in senior management and performance. This positive link exists because women have higher interpersonal skills than males (Pastore et al., 2020) and are more likely to be effective at maintaining harmony (Song et al., 2020).

While this finding differs from Carter et al. (2010) and Marinova et al. (2016), who found no link between women's empowerment and performance. While Adams and Ferreira (2009) and Pastore et al. (2020) confirmed that the two variables had a negative association.

Fourth, WE had a significant influence on OCB. A one-point rise in WE results in a 71% point increase in organizational citizenship behaviors. This finding revealed that women empowerment stimulates and drives women to take on more responsibilities at work. This finding is congruent with the findings of Hsiao et al. (2015), who found that the level of perceived gender diversity positively influenced hotel employees' organizational citizenship behaviors. Similarly, Testa (2009) and Mamman et al. (2012) showed that staff diversity had a positive link and impact on organizational citizenship behaviors.

Fifth, WE had a significant influence on PF. A one-point rise in WE results in a 39% point increase in perceived fairness. This finding suggested that when women are empowered, they perceive more fairness at work. This finding is consistent with the findings of Russen et al. (2021b), who stated that if females are given equal opportunity as their male counterparts, the organization would have a stronger culture based on perceived fairness. Furthermore, Russen et al. (2021a) demonstrated perceived fairness is significant in reinforcing women's empowerment.

Sixth, PF had a significant impact on PR. A one-point rise in PF results in a 63% point increase in performance. This finding indicated that when female employees feel fairness inside the firm, their performance improves. This finding is consistent with Suliman and Al Kathairi (2013) and Wang et al. (2010), who discovered a positive relationship between organizational justice and job performance. Similarly, Krishnan et al. (2018) and Pakpahan et al. (2020) showed that organizational justice aspects positively affected performance.

Seventh, PF had a significant impact on OCB. A one-point increase in PF leads to a .50% point increase in organizational citizenship behaviors. This finding suggested that when female employees perceive justice inside the firm, it has a beneficial impact on their additional volunteer duties at work. This finding is similar with the findings of Messer and White (2006), Shahzad et al. (2014), and Nadiri and Tanova (2010), who found a positive link and effect for fairness on organizational citizenship behaviors. Finally, research findings revealed that perceived fairness not only impacted performance and organizational citizenship behaviors, but also served as an intermediary variable in adjusting the relationship between women empowerment and performance and organizational citizenship behaviors, marking the first attempt to investigate the mediating effect of perceived fairness. This revealed that perceived fairness acts as a mediator in strengthening the effect of women's empowerment on both performance and organizational citizenship behaviors.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The current paper's findings might have a wide range of implications for both academics and practitioners. In terms of theoretical implications, this study adds to the existing literature in tourism and hospitality by developing and empirically testing a comprehensive structural conceptual model involving a combination of latent constructs (i.e. women empowerment, perceived fairness, performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational culture, and organizational support) in the context of Egypt's tourism industry, which is located in the MENA region. The influence of both organizational culture and organizational support on women empowerment in travel agencies was investigated in this study, which was early empirical research to highlight the organizational culture and organizational support as major predictors of women empowerment. Furthermore, this paper contributes to the few previous studies that have investigated the impact of women's empowerment on perceived fairness, performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Furthermore, this paper contributes to current knowledge in the tourism and hospitality sector by assessing-for the first time- the role of perceived fairness as a mediator on the direct link between women empowerment and performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. In this vein, to our knowledge, there are no previous studies that investigate the intervening role of perceived fairness in the link between women empowerment and performance and organizational citizenship behaviors within the tourism context, particularly in the MENA region. This study presents a novel and comprehensive conceptual framework for identifying the predictors and

outcomes of women empowerment in Egyptian travel agencies, which, alongside the findings, can serve as a foundation for future research. In practice, research findings have significant implications to travel agencies' managers, which might develop organizational culture and enhance organizational support in order to enhance and encourage women empowerment, which plays an effective role in enhancing performance and OCB.

Based on the results of the study that proved the impact of organizational culture and organizational support on empowering women in travel agencies. The managers of these agencies should embrace and develop an organizational culture that supports gender diversity at work, and give women the opportunity to take leadership positions in travel agencies. Women's assumption of some leadership positions in travel agencies is reflected in the development of performance through their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The soft skills and ability of women to promote harmony can also be leveraged when women participate in leadership positions. As well, providing a good work environment for women and protecting their safety and security at work by eliminating all types of abuse against all women.

Furthermore, tourism organizations should review and modify their organizational culture and diversity declarations to be more inclusive. This culture may be promoted through diversity training courses or sessions for employees, supervisors, managers, or by management leading by example. If the top management is more supportive to diversity, this will have an impact on the rest of the staff. Employees see a better chance of women getting promoted to higher levels of management when there is a stronger culture of diversity and inclusion.

Consistent with this; Managers should give women the opportunity to express their opinions and suggestions regarding the development of the work and work to implement them. This will be reflected on women's feeling of their importance at work, and that travel agencies value their presence at work, and they have an active role in the development of these agencies. Managers should also listen to the complaints and problems of working women, whether they are related to work or private, and help them solve them quickly, which will be reflected on their feeling towards management's support for them, and leads to increasing their efforts at work.

Furthermore; Managers should develop some measures that support women's empowerment and their assumption of leadership positions. Among these measures are promoting work-life balance, balanced and fair oversight, flexible work policies, and adopting leadership styles that support gender diversity in the workplace. In addition, these measures include flexible work policies, flexible working hours, personal development plans, encouraging women to use technology at work, equal opportunities for both sexes for promotions, and supporting women returning from career breaks.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current paper, like any scientific paper, has some limitations that need to be handled for future work directions. The current paper was carried out in the context of travel agencies in Egypt. As a result, further studies may do a comparative study between antecedents and consequences of empowering women in the Egyptian tourism sectors and other Middle Eastern countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia, UAE, etc.).

Additionally, this study measured the effect of two predictors (organizational culture and organizational support) on women empowerment in travel agencies. The effect of other predictors (e.g. leadership style, HRM practices, work-life balance, etc.) on enhancing women empowerment is recommended to assess in future research. To add to this study which assessed the effect of women empowerment on performance and OCB in travel agencies. Future research may address the effect of women's empowerment on other organizational outcomes (e.g. intention to stay/leave, job involvement, embeddedness, organizational reputation, organizational conflict, etc.)

Furthermore, perceived fairness was added in the current study framework as a mediator variable between women's empowerment and performance and OCB. Further research is needed to examine the mediating role of other variables (e.g., leadership style, quality of work-life, talent management, bullying, employee voice, etc.) in the relationship between women empowerment and performance, as well as OCB. Further study also into the mediating role of organizational culture and organizational support on women empowerment, performance, and OCB is proposed. Finally, future study into the role of OCB in moderating the relationship between women's empowerment and performance is suggested.

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