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## Women's Glass Ceiling Beliefs and Career Satisfaction in View of Occupational Self-Efficacy

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### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of glass-ceiling beliefs on women's career satisfaction in view of the moderating role of occupational self-efficacy in higher education sector of Saudi Arabia. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed and after establishing the validity and reliabilities of the scale, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis for hypothesis testing was conducted. It is evident that glass-ceiling beliefs (Denial and Resilience) has a strong influence on women career satisfaction whereas acceptance has a moderate impact of their career satisfaction. On the other hand, resignation influence negatively. Occupational self-efficacy affect the glass-ceiling beliefs and women's career satisfaction relationships. Occupational self- efficacy has a positive influence on the relationships between denial, resilience, resignation and Career satisfaction while on acceptance it has a negative influence. It is one of the first studies to be conducted in this domain in the Saudi context.*

**Keywords:** Glass-ceiling Beliefs (GCB), denial, resilience, acceptance, resignation, women career satisfaction, occupational self-efficacy.

### **1. Introduction**

In order to explain that women are discouraged to reach to the top positions of the organizations "Glass ceiling" is one of the most significant and acceptable concept in organizational research journals (Hymowitz & Schellhardt , 1986). According to this theory, women have the potential to reach the top management positions but an invisible barrier hinders their career movement to reach the top-level management positions. Early researchers on glass ceiling said that it is a transparent barrier that withhold women from obtaining high management position in their organizations. It affects at a great deal to women working in first line and middle level position and they are women create a barrier in their career progression (Janeen & Olin , 2000).

#### *1.1. Women's Glass Ceiling Beliefs*

For measuring women internal perceptions, regarding glass ceiling in their organization and society Smith, Caputi and Crittenden (2012) established a multi-factor questionnaire called Pathways Career Survey. The questionnaire concluded four types of glass ceiling beliefs which are denial, resilience, acceptance and resignation. According to the study (Smith, Caputi, & Crittenden , 2012), *Denial* is failure to accept a glass ceiling and the belief that males and females are facing similar issues at workplace and that glass ceiling is non-existent in the organization e.g., "Women have the ability to reach the top management positions in business management and politics". *Resilience* defines a belief that females are capable enough to reach to the top by an increase in their qualification and experiences, which helps them in overcoming discrimination. *Resignation* is a negative belief, which states that females are facing negative attitudes about their jobs in the pursuit of career and feel like giving up in their effort to breaking the glass ceiling e.g., "females at the top suffer from more emotional stress as compared to men when facing any crisis in their teams". Finally, last belief is *Acceptance*, which states that women prefer family to other career related professions, such as raising children. Career progression is summarized, as a set of beliefs pro C family/anti-career progress, e.g. "Females are not very much concerned about promotions as compared to males".

#### *1.2. Women Glass Ceiling in Middle-East Countries*

Considering the hurdles, which women have to face in order to reach high management positions in their organization, one of the toughest hurdle is societal norms. These norms include family career expectations, marriage and family responsibilities. These norms and responsibilities restrain women abilities to progress in their organizations and careers. Metcalfe in 2008 in his study examine the

relationship among globalization, management and women in Middle East. In his study, he stated in middle east women face both organizational and social hurdles while entering and progressing in the labor market.

Moghadam in 2003 conducted a study "Gender and social change in Middle East" in which he stated that women in Middle east as compared to other Asian and African countries face worse legal status and social positions. They are considered as mothers and wives. There is huge gender segregation limiting opportunities for women to enter in the labor market. Employers consider women as weak and are not expected to be employed in their organizations.

Certain societal and organizational norms in Middle East, strengthen these beliefs and create hurdles in women progression. Existence of different ethnic group, social classes, age groups and education levels in Middle Eastern countries has further worsen women labor participation. Women are considered as one who do not need to work or contribute in family income but to serve family (Parents, Spouse and Children) at home (Metcalfe, 2008).

Al-Manasra (2013) stated that private sector organizations are not willing to hire women in their organizations because of two reasons: First due to these restricted societal norms and second, due to additional costs which organizations has to bear in times of maternity leaves (Paid vacations for 40 days till 3 months).

### 1.3. Career Satisfaction

Career of an individual can be defined as a sequence of lifelong role or job related experiences. So, career satisfaction can be explained as employee's subjective feelings regarding their own achievement and success in their career (Poole, Langan-Fox , & Omodei , 1993; Hall, 2001; Wickramasinghe & Jayaweera, 2010).

### 1.4. Glass Ceiling Beliefs and Career Satisfaction

Smith, Caputi & Crittenden (2012) showed that denial and resilience positively relate to career satisfaction. Resignation has a negatively influence on career satisfaction whereas acceptance has no influence on career satisfaction. Smith (2012) developed a model showing the relationship among career satisfaction, glass-ceiling beliefs and desire to pursue career advancement. According to his study, women with high career satisfaction and low desire to pursue career advancement have an acceptance belief (We do not want what men want). Women with high career satisfaction and high desire to pursue career advancement have a denial belief (There is a level playing field). Women with low career satisfaction and low desire to pursue career advancement have a resignation belief (We give up its too painful), whereas women with low career satisfaction and high desire to pursue career advancement have a resilience belief (Let us break through this glass ceiling).

- Hypothesis 1: Women's glass ceiling beliefs have a significant influence on their career satisfaction.
- Hypothesis1a: Denial has a positive influence on women's career satisfaction.
- Hypothesis1b: Resilience has a positive influence on women's career satisfaction.
- Hypothesis1c: Acceptance has a positive influence on women's career satisfaction.
- Hypothesis1d: Resignation has a negative influence on women's career satisfaction.

### 1.5. Occupational Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a personal belief in the ability to succeed. If employees have faith in themselves that they can perform their job activities, which are required to accomplish their targets, they will take risk in order to achieve it. Self-efficacy is an individual's personal assessment regarding their competency to perform certain jobs, activates or behaviors. It indicates their faith on themselves rather than their actual skills or capabilities (Staples, Hulland, & Higgins, 1999).

Betz & Hackett in(1981) developed occupational self-efficacy theory by using the self-efficacy concept to employee's behaviors regarding their career. It is defined as employee's judgments of their abilities to perform career behaviors regarding to career development, accomplishment of their job activities, choice, and adjustment (Anderson & Betz, 2001). Occupational self-efficacy means a personal self-belief that one can be successful in the desired career (Bandura, 2001; Ballout, 2009; Mueller & Conway, 2008).

### 1.6. Occupational Self-Efficacy, Career Satisfaction & Glass Ceiling Beliefs

Occupational self-efficacy strongly predicts the women risk taking (Llewellyn, Sanchez, Asghar, & Jones, 2008). If women feel that they can advance in their career like men in their organizations (Denial and Resignation), they would put more efforts in their career advancement activities. The stronger the feeling of efficacy, the more likely a woman efforts would be successful and more likely she would take on risk activities.

Employees having high occupational self-efficacy, consider changing organizational situations and barriers as a challenge for themselves. Their failures never force them to give up their effort; rather they regain their self-confidence instantly and work even harder resulting in more career growth and satisfaction (Bandura, 1997). Employees having resilience has the ability to access and exploit resources to overcome career obstacles; they have more self-efficacy and generally are more satisfied with their careers (Lyons , Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015).

Employee career pessimism (Acceptance and resignation beliefs) indicate their negative perceptions regarding career-related decision process and the sense of control they have in obtaining desired career (Saka & Kelly, 2008). This leads to career related problems like low satisfaction and growth (Shin & Lee, 2016). Employees having low self-efficacy, have low career aspirations. They consider networking scenarios as a hazard and try to avoid it or reduce or abandon their efforts to achieve their goals (Bandura, 1997).

Leader's attributes have a positive influence of their occupational self-efficacy and consequently their career satisfaction. Research also shows that occupational self-efficacy has a positive influence on career development initially and it influences career satisfaction later (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Schyns & Sczesny, 2010).

- Hypothesis 2: Occupational self-efficacy moderates the relationship between women's glass ceiling beliefs and their career satisfaction.
- Hypothesis2a: Occupational self-efficacy moderates the relationship between denial and their career satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 2b: Occupational self-efficacy moderates the relationship between resilience and their career satisfaction.
- Hypothesis2c: Occupational self-efficacy moderates the relationship between acceptance and their career satisfaction.
- Hypothesis2d: Occupational self-efficacy moderates the relationship between resignation and their career satisfaction.

### 1.7. Research Objective

One of the main objective is to add to the understanding of the women's glass ceiling and career satisfaction by investigating their beliefs of glass ceiling (Denial, Resilience, Acceptance and Resignation) and career satisfaction in relation with occupational self-efficacy. Although women glass ceiling beliefs have been included in organizational studies but the connection between the glass ceiling beliefs and career satisfaction with reference to occupational self-efficacy is not clear. Although the number of women is increasing in professional organizations, there is limited research that explored women's glass ceiling and their career satisfaction but it is through limited variables and the information is far from complete. The role of occupational self-efficacy is yet to be included in our understanding of glass ceiling beliefs. The study will contribute to the existing literature as well as inform the practitioners in terms of women glass ceiling beliefs, career satisfaction and occupational self-efficacy.

## 2. Research Model

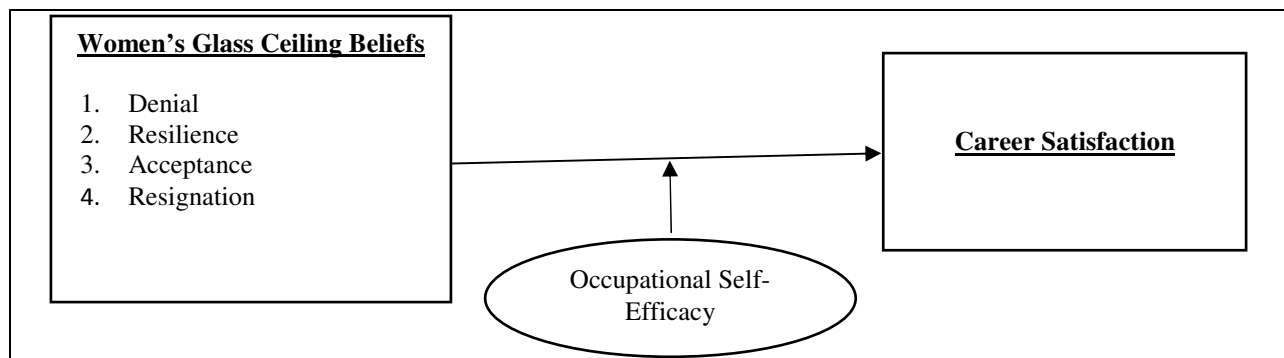


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Methodology

We examined our research hypotheses with the help of datasets from higher education institutions (HEIs) of Saudi Arabia that are approved by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. Female faculty members from these higher education institutions [i.e. Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor] were approached for data collection.

#### 2.1.1. Data Collection and Sample

For data collection two approaches were utilized; first it in Jeddah and Riyadh data was collected through self-administration. Research associate were send to different universities working in Jeddah, Makkah, Taif and Riyadh (Response rate = 80.25%), second it was through emails (with three reminders after every 4days' gap) from Jizan, Dammam, Madinah and Khobar (Response rate = 42.6%). The total response rate from higher education institutions was 72.83%. Almost 46 HEIs were contacted for data collection which make around 71.85% contribution in their sectors. Based upon this, study results can be generalized.

The sample was collected as convenient samples. From Jeddah, Makkah, Taif and Riyadh faculty members were personally approached in their universities. After a brief introduction to our study, the voluntary participants were handed the surveys that were to be collected at the end of the day. Although the survey requires only 10 minutes for completing but some surveys were collected in the next two days to give them enough time to attempt the survey attentively. From Jizan, Khobar, Madinah and Dammam respondents were contacted through emails and were send three reminders after a gap of four days. As shown in Table 1, majority of the respondents were having PhD degrees and belong to age group of 20 years to 40 years.

Demographics	Responses	Frequency	Respondents	%	
Age	20-29	131	31.1	421	100
	30-39	240	57		
	40-49	32	7.6		
	50+	18	4.3		
Education	Bachelor	34	8.07	421	100
	Master	170	40.38		
	Mphil/PhD	217	51.54		
Sector	Public	239	56.77	421	100
	Private	182	43.23		
Tenure	Less than 1 Year	50	11.87	421	100
	1 – 3 Years	157	37.29		
	4 – 6 Years	68	16.15		
	7 – 10 Years	76	18.05		
	More than 10 Years	70	16.63		

Table 1: Frequency Percentages for Glass Ceiling beliefs among age groups, education, Sector and Tenure

### 2.1.2. Instrument Reliability and Validity

For content validity of the scale, three types of experiments were executed. These experiments included focus group discussion, general interviews from two higher education institutions and by doing pilot testing of the survey form. After completion of these experiments, survey form was modified in terms of language simplification and survey translation from English to Arabic (by using back translation method) for those who find difficulty in understanding English.

### 2.1.3. Measures

The survey includes items for demographics (i.e. Age, Education, Sector and Tenure).

**2.1.3.1 Glass ceiling beliefs:** To measure glass ceiling beliefs we used Smith et al. (2012) scale. To estimate the reliability and validity of the scales, Cronbach Alpha statistics and confirmatory factor analysis were used. The results verified that the scale is reliable and valid. The scale included 38 items with 7 point Likert scale with options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. We first entered all items together for factor extractions and obtained four meaningful factors similar to those of the original subscales. *Denial* is a positive belief that glass-ceiling is non-existent in their organization and that it is a myth and not a reality (i.e., “Women are now part of executive positions in almost all the fields.”). Exploratory factor analysis was conducted for construct validity which revealed that 10 items of Denial explain 69.76% of the variance. Cronbach alpha coefficient for Denial was .85.

*Resilience* is a positive belief that women can break the glass-ceiling and move forward in the organization. An example item is, “Getting highly educated help women to remove gender inequality against them”. For construct validity, exploratory factor analysis revealed that 11 items explain 64.27% of the variance in Resilience. Cronbach alpha coefficient for Resilience was .92.

*Acceptance* is a negative belief that explains that women are happy in their family lives and do not seek promotions to leadership positions (i.e. “Women do not like to work more than usual work timings”). Exploratory factor analysis revealed that items of Acceptance explain 63.41% of the variance. Cronbach alpha coefficient for Acceptance was .90.

*Resignation* is a negative belief that submits to male dominance in the organization. An example item is, “Women are not able to criticize their subordinates when needed”. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that items of resignation explain 58.54% of the variance. Cronbach alpha coefficient for resignation was .91.

**2.1.3.2 Career Satisfaction:** We adapted 5 items to measure the career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). Example items include “I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for income.”. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that the 5 items of career satisfaction explain 69.14% of the variance. Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale was .88.

**2.1.3.3 Occupational Self-Efficacy:** For measuring occupational self-efficacy a short version of (Schyns & Collani, A new occupational self-efficacy scale and its relation to personality constructs and organizational variables, 2002) was used. Example items include “When I am confronted by a problem in my job, I can usually find several solutions.”. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that the 6 items of occupational self-efficacy explain 66.33% of the variance. Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale was .90.

## 3. Data Analysis

### 3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Analysis

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 indicates that the responses for all the study scales were above the neutral response options. Results of mean and standard deviation show that data has normal distribution. Results of Pearson correlation analysis indicate in table 2 that career satisfaction was positively correlated with denial, resilience and occupational self-efficacy. However, it is negatively correlated with acceptance and resignation. Occupational self-efficacy has a strong association with denial, resilience, acceptance,

resignation and occupation self-efficacy. Resignation has negative and weak relationship with denial, resilience and career satisfaction.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Denial	4.37	.83						
Resilience	4.91	.82	.74**					
Acceptance	3.73	.92	-.45**	-.51**				
Resignation	3.85	.85	-.29**	-.32**	.08			
Career Satisfaction	4.60	.79	.76**	.79**	-.59**	-.31**		
Occupational Self-Efficacy	4.43	.71	.72**	.83**	-.51**	-.28**	.73**	

\*\*P< 0.01; \*P< 0.05

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis (Saudi Arabia, N=421)

### 3.2. Multiple Regression Analysis

For analyzing the influence of four forms of glass ceiling beliefs on women's career satisfaction and to measure moderation of occupational self-efficacy on glass ceiling beliefs and career satisfaction relationship; multiple regression analysis was conducted (Table 3). In Higher education sector of Saudi Arabia, denial, resilience and acceptance had main effects on women's career satisfaction. Among four forms of glass ceiling beliefs; resilience strongly impacted women career satisfaction ( $\beta = .49$ , sig = .00) whereas acceptance was having the least influence ( $\beta = -.17$ , sig = .00). Resignation belief has no direct influence on women career satisfaction in higher education institutions of Saudi Arabia.

Denial interacted with occupational self-efficacy (OSE) to enhance women's career satisfaction (WCS) as shown in Figure 2. The higher level of OSE and higher Resilience interacted significantly towards increased WCS (Figure 3). The interaction plots in figure 2 and 3 show that OSE moderated the Denial-WCS relationship more than the resilience -WCS relationship. If women have high occupational self-efficacy than negative influence of acceptance on WCS becomes stronger as shown in figure 4. Resignation did not have a main effect on WCS but it interacted with OSE as shown in Figure 5. Overall, R statistics showed that women's GCB and their relationship with OSE predicted 76% variation in WCS. Moreover, the F statistics values for the model showed that in Saudi Arabia glass ceiling beliefs and CSE significantly influences career satisfaction. Durbin-Watson statistics show no autocorrelation in the model variables.

	$\beta$	t-values	Sig
Constant	2.45	6.14	.00
Denial	.32	7.68	.00
Resilience	.49	11.19	.00
Acceptance	-.15	-6.51	.00
Resignation	-.23	-3.64	.17
Occupational Self-Efficacy	.59	13.45	.00
Denial * OSE	.57	5.32	.00
Resilience * OSE	.32	4.28	.00
Acceptance * OSE	-.24	-4.74	.03
Resignation * OSE	-.13	-3.71	.02
Model Specifications			
R <sup>2</sup>	.83		
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>	.76		
F Value	40.18		
F Significance	.00		
Durbin-Watson	1.95		

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis for the Moderating Effect of Occupational Self-Efficacy in the Relationship between Glass-Ceiling Beliefs and Career Satisfaction

Figure 2 represents that with low occupational self-efficacy, it would be low denial and low career satisfaction in Saudi women faculty members. Whereas, with high occupational self-efficacy, it would be high denial and high career satisfaction.

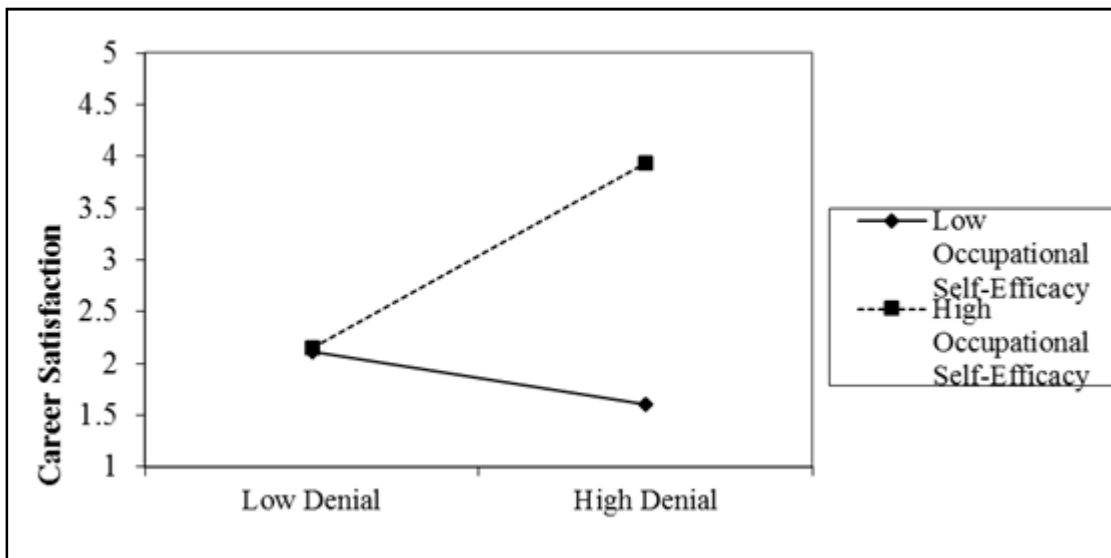


Figure 2: Interactional Plot for Denial, Career Satisfaction and Occupational Self-Efficacy

Figure 3 represents when women faculty members have resilient views regarding glass ceiling and they have high occupational self-efficacy, they would have high career satisfaction. Whereas, low high occupational self-efficacy, it would be low resilience and low career satisfaction.

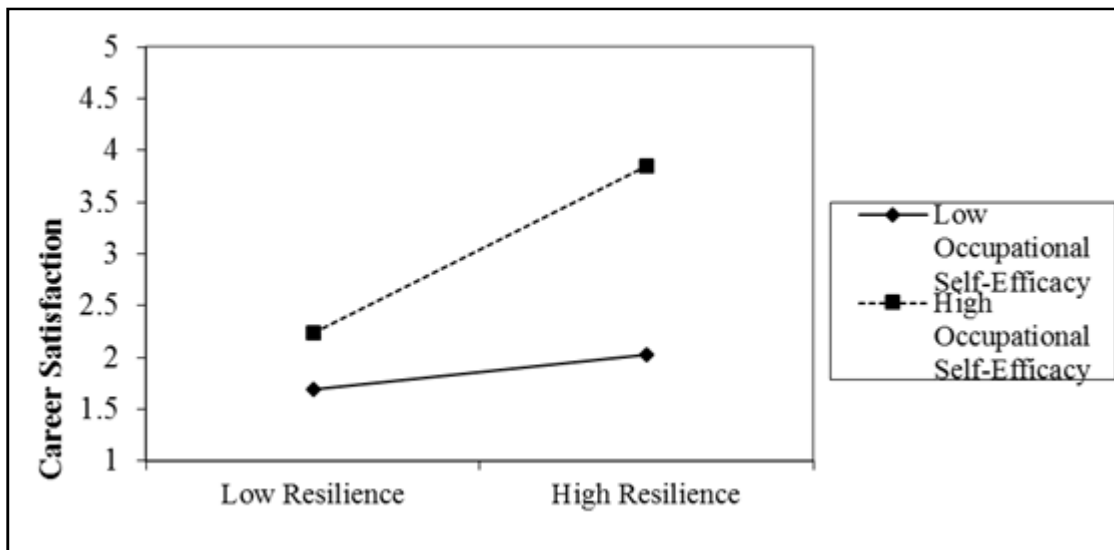


Figure 3: Interactional Plot for Resilience, Career Satisfaction and Occupational Self-Efficacy

Figure 4 represents that with low occupational self-efficacy, it would be high acceptance and low career satisfaction in women. Whereas, with high occupational self-efficacy, it would be less acceptance and high career satisfaction.

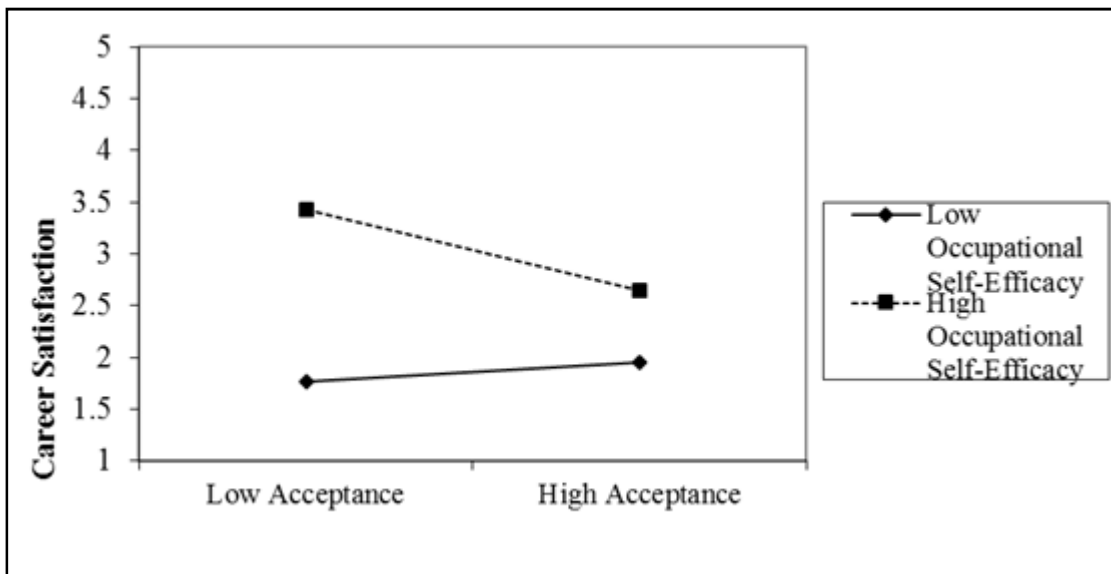


Figure 4: Interactional Plot for Acceptance, Career Satisfaction and Occupational Self-Efficacy

Figure 5 represents that with low occupational self-efficacy, it would be high resignation and low career satisfaction in women. Whereas, with high occupational self-efficacy, it would be less resignation and high career satisfaction.

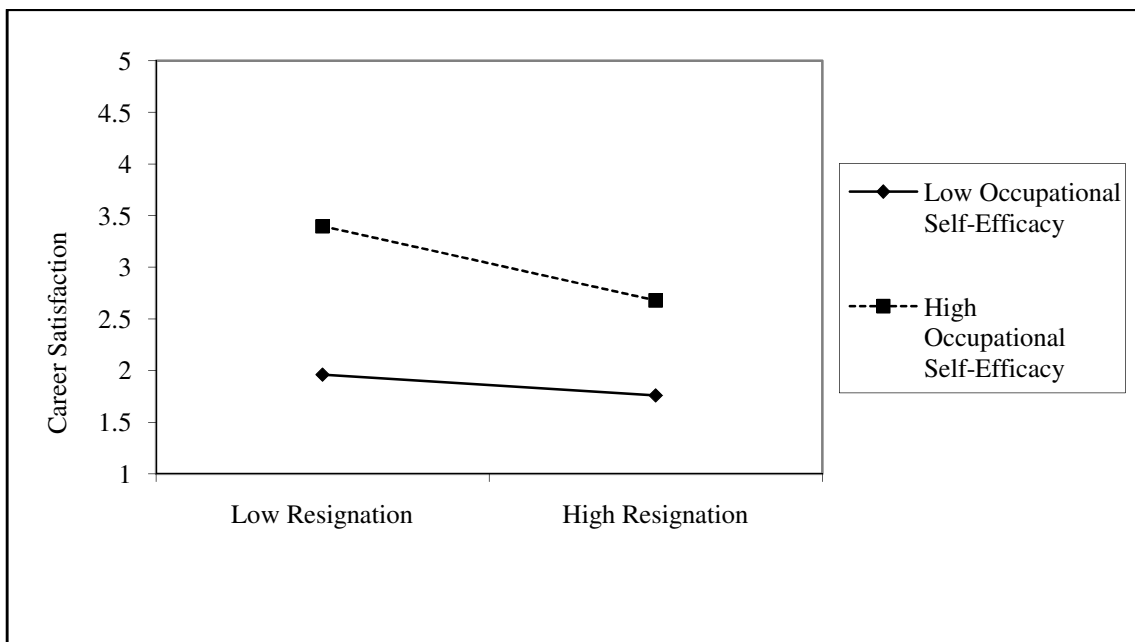


Figure 5: Interactional Plot for Resignation, Career Satisfaction and Occupational Self-Efficacy

### 3.3. Independent Samples t Test

The Independent Samples t Test was used to compare the means of public and private sector HEIs of Saudi Arabia to determine whether there statistical different. The Independent Samples t Test is a parametric test. Table 4 indicate the means of women glass-ceiling beliefs, their occupational self-efficacy and women’s career satisfaction for public and private sector HEIs are different. The results show that both samples are significantly different with  $p = 0.000$  at confidence level  $\alpha = 0.05$  for moderating variable (Occupational self-efficacy), dependent variable (Career satisfaction) and independent variables (Denial, Resilience, Acceptance and Resignation).

Variable	Public		Private		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Denial	4.42	.93	4.33	.70	3.91	.00
Resilience	4.80	.82	4.97	.91	4.15	.00
Acceptance	3.58	.94	3.86	.88	4.52	.00
Resignation	3.75	.91	3.70	.80	6.45	.00
Occupational Self-Efficacy	4.49	.80	4.37	.62	14.24	.00
Career Satisfaction	4.69	.89	4.53	.63	16.81	.00

Table 4: Independent Sample t- test for Public and Private sector comparisons

#### 4. Discussion

In this study, we looked at occupational self-efficacy as a moderating variable for enhancing women career satisfaction in relation to their glass ceiling beliefs. The results showed that women in Saudi Arabia who have Denial perceive high career satisfaction but when they have high OSE this relation becomes stronger.

Women working in public sector HEIs have more denial belief than women are private sector HEIs because in public sector HEIs have to follow ministry announced policies and procedures in respective of one being man or woman. However, women working in private sector are more resilient than women working in public sector HEIs because in private sector they have more opportunities for career progression and they can find more learning opportunities resulting in more career satisfaction. The situation in Saudi Arabia is relatively different from other countries because women workforce participation is only initiated a few years ago through government initiative for enhancing women participation. That is why women in both sector of HEIs in Saudi Arabia have high denial and resilience belief and moderate acceptance and resignation belief as shown in the results of Table 4.

#### 5. Implications of the Study

This study aimed to describe the women's glass ceiling beliefs (Denial, Resilience, Acceptance and Resignation) and their career satisfaction. In countries like Saudi Arabia where there is high gender segregation and limited job opportunities for women, HEIs have to plan certain structural changes to support their optimism (Denial and Resilience) and reduce pessimism (Acceptance and Resignation) women with hopeless beliefs (Acceptance and Resignation) that can affect their career satisfaction. These initiatives should include practice like coaching, guiding, mentoring and more career advancement opportunities that can enhance their occupational self-efficacy (Jarmon, 2014).

Management of higher education institutions can utilize women role models; because they can influence these women having acceptance and resignation beliefs more strongly with the practices like storytelling, mentoring and by providing them guidance to have more career opportunities. These types of practices not only influence their career satisfaction but also influence their OSE positively (Jandeska & Kraimer, 2005).

Management should encourage women with more pessimistic beliefs (i.e. acceptance & resignation) with more coaching and mentoring practices to raise their occupational self-efficacy. These practices can enhance their trust and respect on management and result in their higher career satisfaction. Higher education institution working in Saudi Arabia should analyze women's GCB before providing any training programs. they should also incorporate analysis of women GCB before international staffing practices so that they can hire women having more denial and resilience beliefs which can also enhance organizational productivity.

#### 6. Limitations and Future Research Direction

The study has a cross-sectional design and data was collected at a single point in time for independent, dependent and moderating variables and thus we cannot establish causal inferences. A longitudinal study could also be done to measure the stability of women glass ceiling beliefs and establish whether they are psychological states or traits. Second, data of the study is self-reported and other triangulation methods of data collection can be used such as personal interviews or group administered interviews for more in-depth study. Third, this study was a quantitative study and different qualitative approaches could be used to study the glass ceiling beliefs, women career satisfaction and occupation self-efficacy relationships.

#### 7. Conclusion

The present study analyzed women glass ceiling beliefs in public and private sector higher education institutions of Saudi Arabia and verified the moderating influence of their occupational self-efficacy in the relationship between women glass ceiling beliefs and their career satisfaction. The study revealed that strong relationship exists between Denial and women career satisfaction as well as Resilience and women career satisfaction. Occupational self-efficacy interacted significantly with Denial (Positive), Resilience (Positive), Acceptance (Negative) and Resignation (Negative) in higher education institutions.

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