

# Beyond the glass ceiling: *Barriers for Women to Positions of Power in the Bahraini Banking Industry*

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global  
future  
**begins**  
here

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# The Problem Statement

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Despite a seemingly remarkable progress on career advancement women remain underdressed in the highest leadership positions in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

## The Glass Ceiling

Is a notion used to describe the invisible barrier in front of women seeking to move up organizational hierarchies.

This phenomenon is responsible for the scarcity of women holding leadership and senior management positions in many areas, but particularly in business

# Evidence supporting existence of the problem

**Insufficient knowledge** about the experience of women in bank leadership in Bahrain (Metcalf, 2008).

The current literature review didn't address the issue of women's under representation at the finance sector by combining 3 different level of barriers and show their effect on the glass ceiling in the context of Bahrain.

**Exclusion of women from leadership roles impacts** negatively on productively militates against a diverse workplace ( Noble & Moore 2006).

**The research arguments up to date have not sufficiently** covered and independently analysed the barriers faced by women in non – western countries that are culturally influenced by Islamic values.

**Glass Ceiling is costly** in terms of turnover costs as qualified women leave organizations (Bastida and Moscoso,2015).

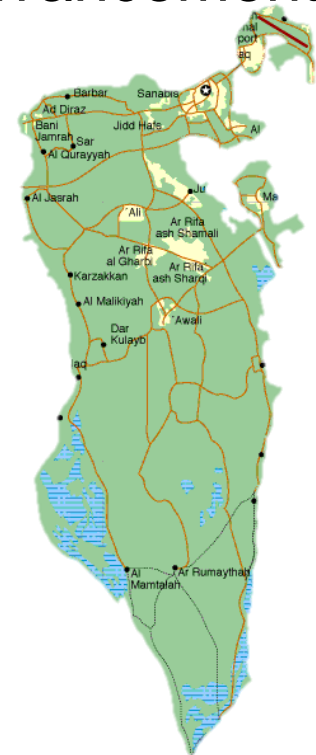
Explore the effect of the glass ceiling in the banking sector by tackling the barriers to women's from multiple environmental levels: **Organization barriers** (i.e. mess level), **societal barriers** (i.e. macro level) and **individual barriers** (i.e. micro level) .

## To explore:

- How women conceptualise the effect of the glass ceiling.
- how they perceive it.
- what could be the resolutions in the shape of coping mechanisms to eliminate the barriers and empower women reach senior executive positions in the finance sector.

# Purpose Statement

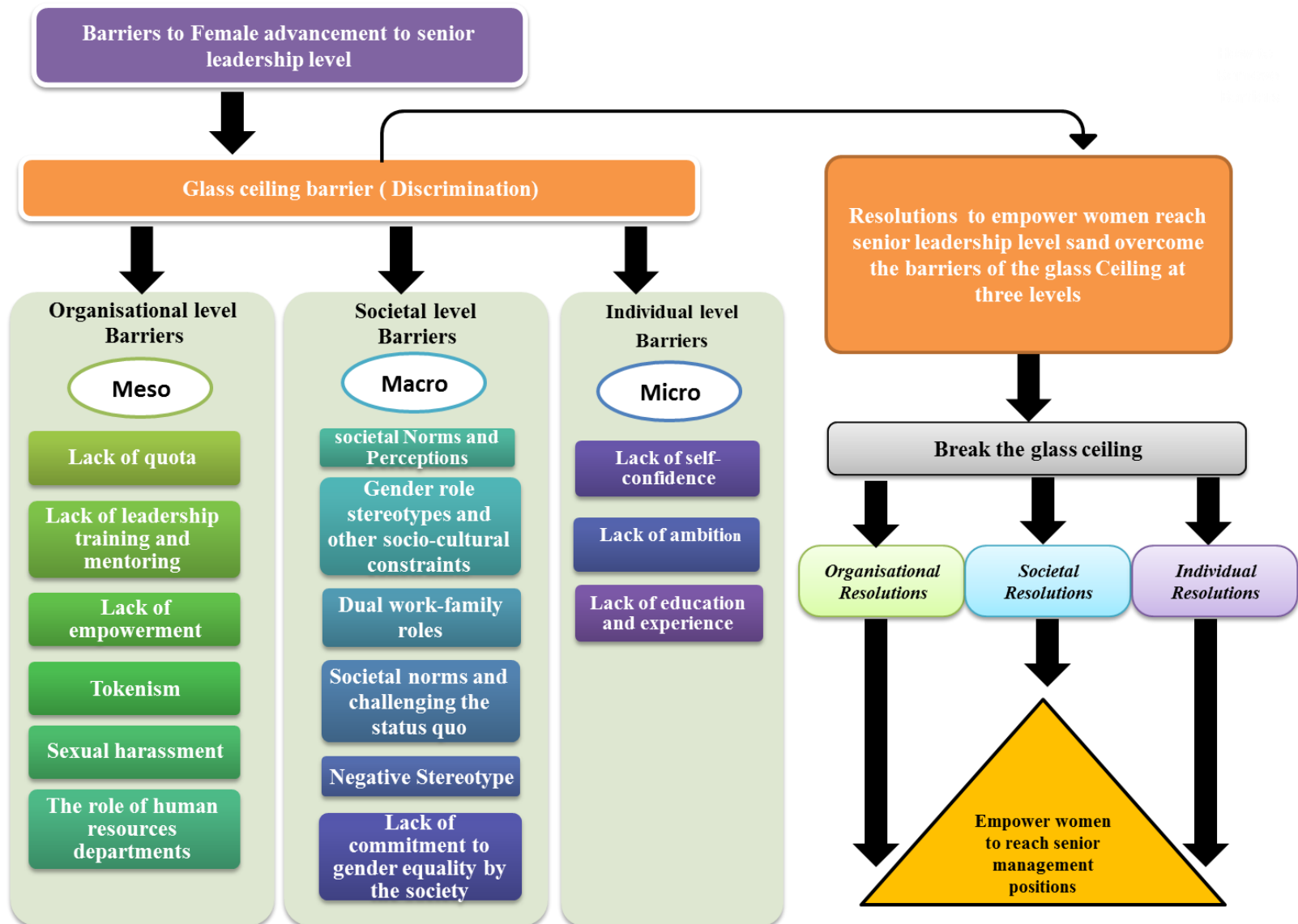
The purpose of the *qualitative study* was to *explore* the lived experiences of **37 women managers** in the *banks*. In order to understand the factors they perceived to be contributors or barriers to women's career advancement to senior executive positions.



# Theories explored to understand/ perpetuate the Glass ceiling phenomenon

- **Glass Cliff Theory:** Extending the metaphor of the glass ceiling, the phenomenon describes whereby women are more likely to be found in leadership positions that are associated with a greater risk of failure and criticism.
- **The Golden Halo:** Presents in many aspects of organizational behavior, and refers to the cognitive bias which people display when they express a preference for men in recruitment.
- **Sticky Floors:** Women stagnation long time at one position.
- **Tokenism theory** Very few members of a disadvantaged group are accepted into positions usually reserved for members of the advantaged group
- **Discrimination Theory:** is the behavior or actions, usually negative, towards an individual or group of people, especially on the basis of sex/race/social class.
  - - Racial discrimination
  - - Age discrimination
  - -Gender Discrimination
  -
- **Gender roles stereotyping :** socially constructed discourses that surround the perceived biologically-produced responsibilities that women bear towards their children and family life. And men are leaders 'breadwinner'
- **Role Congruity Theory:** (a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman.
- **Family-work conflict :** The role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible.
- **Gender Differences in Leadership styles :** men are agentic, and women are communal

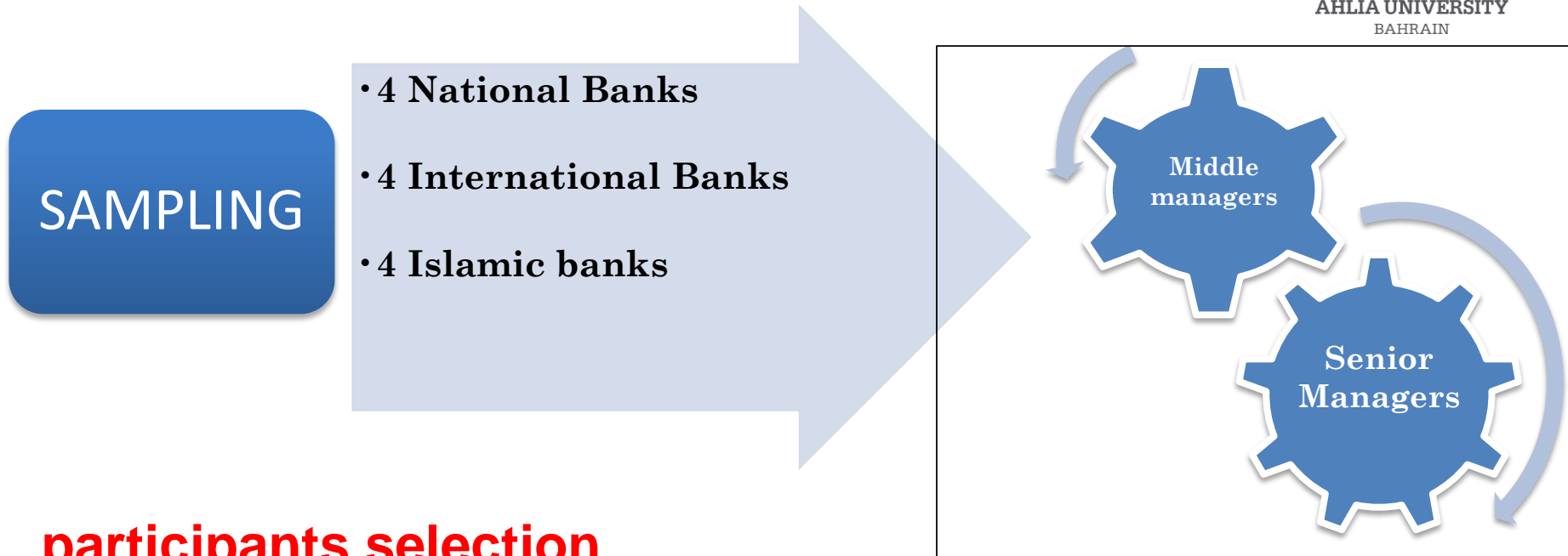
# Empirical finding from the literature review regarding the barriers western women encounter to reach senior management level



1. What barriers are faced by Bahraini women managers in their career progression to reaching senior management positions?
2. How do women perceive the barriers to their career progression in reaching senior management positions?
3. What types of coping mechanisms could be implemented to eliminate the barriers that hinder women from achieving top management positions?



# The Problem Statement



- 52 purposively selected women received invitation to participate.
- 40 relies were received ,12 were declined
- 37 women participated in the final study:
  - 17 senior managers
  - 20 middle level managers

- Free coding
- Searching for schemata
- the software is less useful in terms of addressing issues of validity and reliability in the thematic ideas that emerge during the data analysis process and this is due to the fluid and creative way in which these themes emerge.
- NVivo is less useful simply because of the type of searching it is capable of doing.

# Findings from Research Question 1: The organisational Level barrier

Barriers Level	Main Theme	Sub-Themes
<b>organizational Barrier</b>  (meso level)	<b>Flawed application of organizational laws and policies</b>	<b>Lack of leadership training and mentorship programs</b>
		<b>Lack of quota</b>
	<b>Lack of Autonomy</b>	<b>Lack of women role models</b>
		<b>Disempowerment</b>
		<b>Lack of confidence in women's performance</b>
	<b>Intra-organizational</b>	<b>Bias and discrimination</b>
		<b>Unfairness in judging women</b>
		<b>Favoritism towards men over women</b>
		<b>Ageism against women</b>
		<b>Stagnation</b>
		<b>Limited promotions given to women</b>
		<b>lack of trust in women's ability(mistrust)</b>
		<b>Religious dogma</b>
		<b>The feeling of indignity by males working under female managers</b>
		<b>Appointing Token women</b>

# Findings from Research Question 1: The Societal Level barrier

Barriers Level	Main Theme	Sub-Themes
<b>Societal Barrier</b>  (macro level)	<b>Societal Norms and Perceptions</b>	<b>Stereotyping</b>
		<b>Religious dogma</b>
		<b>Clash of cultural values</b>

# Findings from Research Question 1: The Individual Level barrier

Barriers Level	Main Theme	Sub-Themes
<b>Individual Barrier</b> (Micro level)	Individual limitation	Uncertainty
		Disempowerment
		Diffidence
		Less career orientation
		Incompetence
		Dependence
		Lack of education and mentorship
		lack of experience
	Hesitancy and Fear	Fear of failure in reaching leadership positions
		Fear of being blamed and guilt
		Fear of commitment
		Fear of risk taking
		Anxiety over work life balance
		Fear of losing job



# **Findings from Research Question 2: Dealing with the barrier of women's career progression**

Barriers Level	Main Theme	Sub-Themes
<b>organizational , Societal, Individual, Barrier</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Resistance to heteronomy</b>
		<b>Overcome barriers by empowerment</b>
	<b>Acquiescence</b>	<b>Recognise the existence of a glass ceiling.</b>
		<b>Submission to the norms</b>

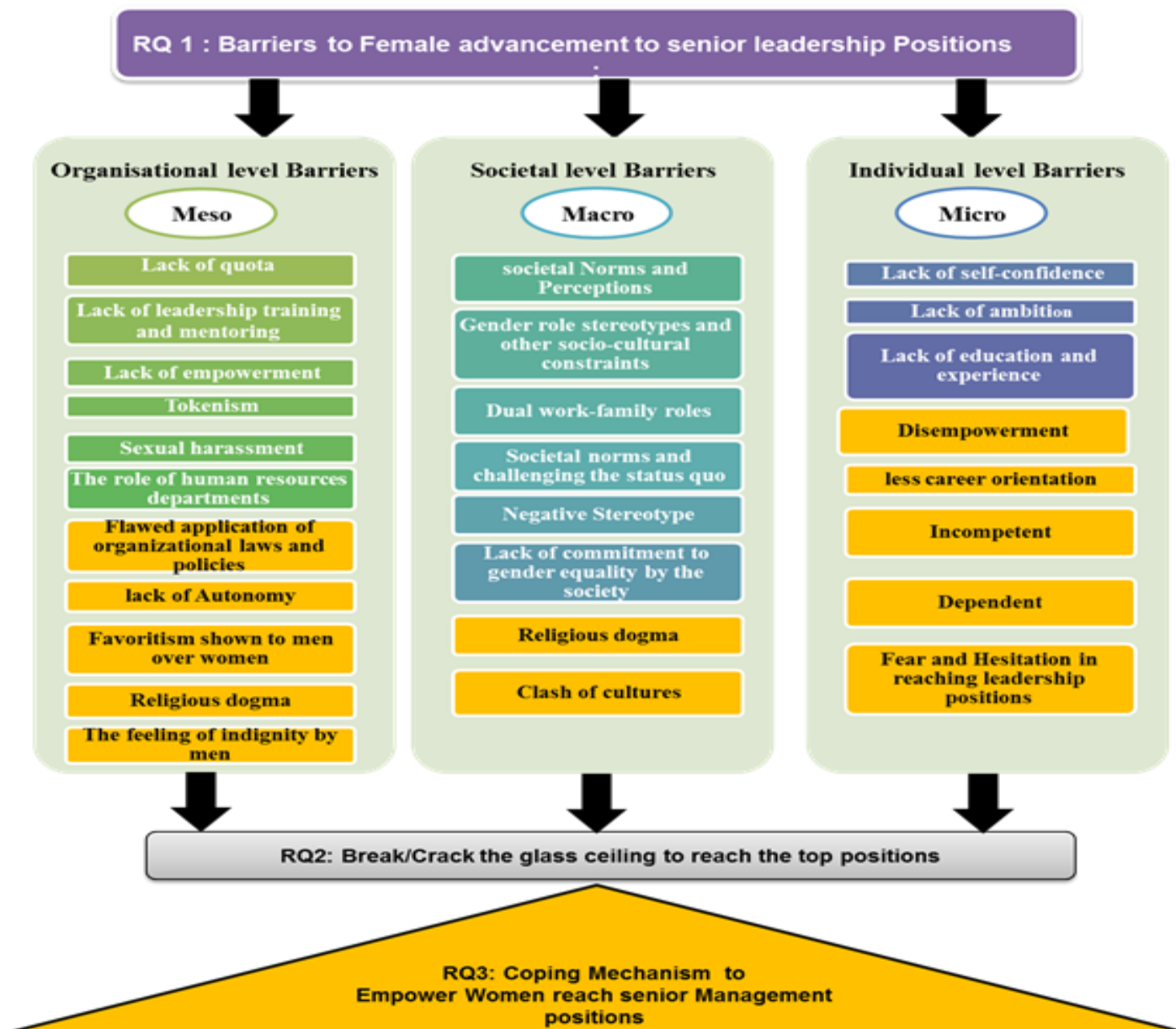
# **Findings from Research Question 3: The proposed resolutions to overcome the Barriers to women's career**

Barriers Level	Main Theme	Sub-Themes
Organizational , Societal, Individual, Barrier	Competence	Training, Mentorship and Sponsorship
		Networking
		Role models
		Diversity and Inclusion
		Quotas
	Norms and customs	Media
		(a) Overcome stereotyping barrier:
		(a) Overcome Religious dogma barrier:
		(a) Overcome Heteronomy barrier:
	Self- Improvement	Self-control
		Build Self-confidence
		Education
		Ambition
		Entrepreneurship

# Key Findings from the data collection

Organisational level Barriers	Societal level Barriers	Individual level Barriers
flawed application of organisational laws and policies	Religious dogma	Individual level Barriers
lack of Autonomy		Disempowerment
Lack of Autonomy vs. (Heteronomy)	Clash of cultures	less career orientation
Religious dogma		Incompetent
		Dependent
The feeling of indignity by men		Fear and Hesitation in reaching leadership positions

## Data collection finding of the Barriers Bahraini women encounter to reach senior management level



## Key Findings

- Societal pressure and cultural norms continue to suppress women in the Bahraini banking sector.
- Informal network are essential sources for reaching top positions in the Bahraini banking sector.
- Religious dogma is a major drawback for women's career progression.

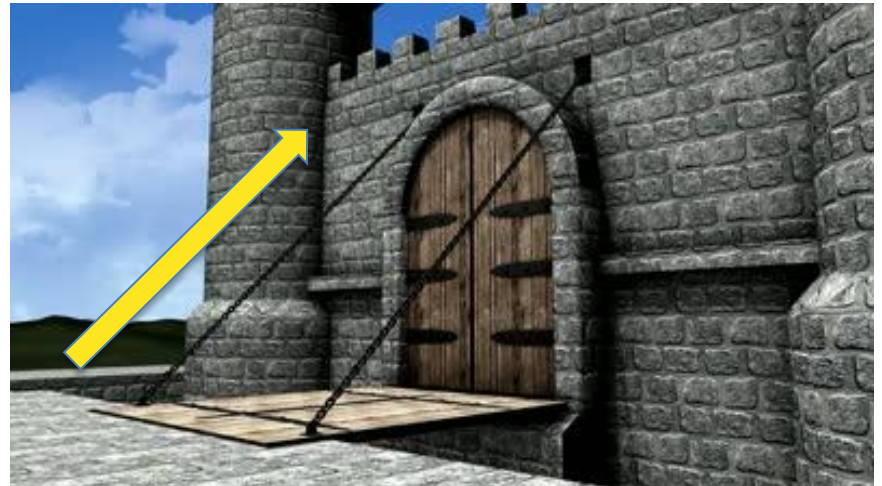
# Theoretical Contribution

- The Glass Ceiling experience is slightly **different** in other contexts/ geographical locations:
- The western women visualize the glass-ceiling barrier as an **illusion**, although reaching top positions could be impossible for them, however they can see the top positions through the transparent ceiling and **women have an illusion to reach the top** positions but the barriers limit them to reach.



# Coining “draw bridge”

- The glass ceiling is experienced differently in Bahrain than other contexts due the influence of the **societal norms and cultures on women’s mobility**.
- It is coined in this study as a “draw bridge” which means despite the existence of the glass ceiling **once women break through the barriers women** cant reach seniority and the door close once they reach seniority .



## *Similarities and Differences between the glass ceiling in Western and non-western cultures*

- The nature of the ***Bahraini society is formed by the norms, customs, traditions, and practices*** in the society and is completely effected by the Islamic values .
- ***Patriarchy*** is a social system where the ***male members own the primary moral authority***, and the ***privilege to lead over women*** in terms of the social norms and practices

# Limitation

- Bahrain is a **metropolitan country**, limiting the data influence in rural settings.
- The study method may have left some **concerns for bias** and effect for both (the researcher and the participants).
- **Time constrain** for the for the interviews.
- The finding may not be **transferable to other location**
- Lack of **gathering data from male managers** limiting the study to be only limited for women's views.

# Recommendation

- Re-evaluation of laws and policies gender wise in the Kingdom of Bahrain regarding *promotions* considering women during *maternity* leave as *redundant*.
- Women should make time for *formal and informal network*.
- Bank's should diversify their seniority positions since the banks *clients are not homogenous*, and enforce and implement *policies* consider women's *dual responsibility*.
- The Bahraini society *shouldn't be a victim of fake norms* and perceptions regarding women's *stereotypical roles*.

***Thank you***